

FALL BOOKS 1

# America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW

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## The Francis Effect

PAUL RYAN AND JOSEPH KENNEDY ANSWER  
THE POPE'S CALL TO EMPOWER THE POOR—A Two-Part Series



**O**n the morning of May 25, 1979, 6-year-old Etan Patz left his Manhattan apartment to catch the school bus and was never seen again. The case was cold for decades, until a suspect came forward last year and confessed to the crime. A trial is set to begin this January, though the authorities are still evaluating the credibility of the suspect's confession, as well as his mental capacity. Tragic and heartbreaking though it was and remains for Etan's loved ones, the boy's disappearance helped spark the Missing Children's movement; new state and federal legislation soon provided additional resources for preventing and prosecuting such cases. Etan's picture, in fact, was the first picture of a missing child to appear on milk cartons, perhaps the most visible component of the new public awareness campaign.

The public outcry that prompted policy makers to act was orchestrated in part by the local and national media. Chief among Etan's champions was John Slattery, a reporter at WCBS-TV, the CBS network affiliate in New York City. Every autumn for almost 30 years, John filed a story on the progress (or lack thereof) of the boy's case. A parent of three, John approached the story with a father's heart as well as the keen eye and inquiring mind of a seasoned broadcast journalist.

John Slattery died of a sudden heart attack last week at the age of 63, one month short of his 30th anniversary at WCBS. During the course of his 40 years in broadcasting, John chronicled the triumphs, tragedies and foibles of the city that never sleeps. A four-time Emmy winner, he was one of the first reporters to arrive at ground zero on the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, just in time to watch the second plane strike the World Trade Center. He was also there after the first World Trade Center attack in 1993. He braved the elements to cover the blizzard of February 1994 and the devastation of Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

We knew John at **America** from the many interviews he conducted here over the years, the last one in the office where I write this column. He had come here to talk to me about **America's** interview with Pope Francis. His viewers would not have known it, of course, but the papal interview was not just another story for John. He was a man of deep faith and, like so many of us, was deeply moved by the new pope's words and actions. By sheer coincidence, John was a parishioner at the church in Larchmont, N.Y., where I say Mass a few times a month. I got to know him better there, as well as his lovely wife, Suzie, who was with him when he passed.

John would have loved this issue of **America**. A lifelong student of politics, he would have liked seeing these two political titans from opposite sides of the aisle talking about the pope, the poor and the proper role of government. "That's a good story," I'm sure he would have said.

"You know what I admire about you," I told John after Mass one Sunday. "During the week you might be interviewing a president or a master criminal, or covering a distant war or a major political campaign; but on most Sundays, no matter what, you're here working as a lector, worshipping with your fellow Catholics." He laughed and said, "Father, here I get to read the good news." That was John: big-hearted, faithful, fast with a quip, down to earth. I don't know who'll cover the Etan Patz case this winter, but it's hard to imagine anyone doing it with as much intelligence and humanity as John Slattery did. Many people criticize television news, mainly for being shallow or sensational or just plain unhelpful. Some of that is obviously true. But like most things human, television journalism can also be noble and beautiful and true. That's still possible, though, in my humble opinion, it just got a lot harder.

**MATT MALONE, S.J.**

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Kevin Spinale, S.J.

**EDITORIAL E-MAIL**

america@americamagazine.org

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## ON THE WEB

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### Breaking Ebola

Six months into the unprecedented outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus in West Africa, the United States and international community are finally trying to catch up to the crisis. On Sept. 16 President Obama committed 3,000 military personnel and \$750 million to coordinate relief efforts. Two days later the United Nations Security Council convened its first emergency meeting on a public health crisis, unanimously declaring the epidemic “a threat to international peace and security.”

The question now is: Will these efforts be enough to avoid what health officials see as possible worst-case scenarios? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of Ebola cases in Liberia and Sierra Leone, two of the hardest hit countries, could reach between 550,000 and 1.4 million by January absent “additional interventions or changes in community behavior.” But the C.D.C. director, Tom Frieden, held out hope, saying that if 70 percent of Ebola patients receive proper care, the disease could run its course by mid-January and that the recent surge in global support is “exactly what’s needed.”

The next couple of months will be especially crucial, and few institutions can deploy as rapidly as the U.S. military or match its logistical capabilities. But if and when this fever breaks, it will be worth asking whether this is the best way to confront health emergencies. The World Health Organization is the natural alternative, but it has come under criticism for its slow response to the escalating Ebola epidemic. W.H.O., however, is only as effective as U.N. members make it, and it went into West Africa underfunded and understaffed. The time for properly funding its efforts was yesterday, but the international community can still come together to prevent the next crisis.

### United Front on Climate

On an overcast Sunday, Sept. 21, veterans of protest who marched for civil rights and against the Vietnam War in the 1960s joined hands with over 300,000 citizens of every generation, social and economic class, religion and political commitment to walk 2.2 miles through Midtown Manhattan shouting and carrying banners: “Wake up, America”; “The dinosaurs didn’t see it coming, either.”

A nearly block-long string of marchers carried a banner so enormous it could be read only from a distance: “Capitalism Is Killing the Planet.” While delegates prepared for the upcoming United Nations climate summit, the boisterous

crowd marched along singing “We Shall Overcome.” Jesuit scholastics, Sisters of Charity, Capuchin Franciscans from Rome, rabbis, imams, victims of Hurricane Sandy, movie stars, jazz bands and politicians made this People’s Climate March—the largest of the 2,646 climate-change events held in 156 countries that day—radiate a moment of hope while the planet warmed, oceans rose, species of wildlife disappeared, the food supply shrank and we whom God made stewards of creation learned that we must act, even sacrifice, to save our planet.

We know that the concentration of carbon dioxide in the air is now 42 percent above pre-Industrial Revolution levels and that human activity has warmed the planet by 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit. If this trend continues for the next 30 years, The New York Times reports, the temperature “would likely be incompatible with human civilization in its current form.” If we fail to stem these rising tides, the marchers warned us, “There Is No Ark.”

### The Internet Wants to Be Free

“Net neutrality” does not sound like a term that would arouse much passion. Yet more than a dozen religious bodies, including the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, have issued a sharp joint letter to the Federal Communications Commission urging policymakers to keep the Internet “neutral” for the benefit of all of its users.

“We are concerned about paid prioritization and other policies that will increase costs and limit opportunities for our organizations and the communities we serve,” the statement said. The letter comes as the F.C.C. considers the possibility of a “two-tiered” Internet that would allow service providers to charge companies like Netflix a premium for delivering faster service.

On the blog of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops on Sept. 16, Bishop John C. Wester of Salt Lake City argued: “Instead of adopting rules that permit the wealthiest companies to purchase the best service, the F.C.C. should insist on fair treatment for everyone, no matter our income.”

Bishop Wester contends that a bifurcated system would harm religious and nonprofit groups, which would be unable to pay for premium speed. This would make it more difficult for them to communicate with their members and promote their online activities. Over time large content providers would come to dominate the digital realm. Religious groups already have a difficult time conveying their message in the din of our commercialized culture. They deserve equal treatment from government regulators. A free and equal Internet should be an essential condition of our digital age.

# Proceed With Caution

In confronting the quandary of Iraq and Syria, President Obama is tasked with choosing the least worst among a number of awful policy options. The “new” strategy President Obama described in a speech on Sept. 10 and put into action a few weeks later appears painfully similar to the failed policies of the recent past. For over three decades, four presidents have tried to bomb this complex and troubled region into submission. Now the United States and new allies of varying enthusiasm are extending the effort into Syria to suppress the burgeoning threat of the self-described Islamic State.

U.S. and allied forces have struck multiple targets in Syria and Iraq, joined in the desperate defense of the Kurdish city of Kobane near the Turkish border and even engaged a new enemy, the Khorasan Group in Syria. The air assault so far appears thoroughly improvised, raising the worrying possibility of another limitless campaign against terrorism.

The current strategy—opportunistic air attacks accompanied by training and equipping the presumed “moderate” forces within the Syrian resistance—is a recipe for years, if not decades of more suffering for the people of Iraq and Syria. Worse, it is precisely in such environments of bloodshed and chaos that groups like ISIS thrive. Pax Christi in Denmark properly notes that “the costs of setting unclear and moving targets are that violence is compounded while victory remains elusive.”

If returning U.S. troops to Iraq is indeed a nonstarter (as it should be), and if airpower alone is not sufficient to drive back ISIS gains, as military analysts attest, are U.S. and allied forces merely helping confirm the apocalyptic vision of ISIS leadership?

Pope Francis asks for the “unjust aggressor” in the region to be stopped, and American Catholics properly ask if that “stopping” can be accomplished in a manner that protects noncombatants and proposes a reasonable path to an eventual cessation of violence. That latter challenge remains to be addressed.

“Terrorists must be defeated,” said U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon during the opening of a Security Council summit at the United Nations on Sept. 24, “but we must do so in a way that avoids the deliberate acts of provocation that they set for us—victimization, further radicalization and more civilian deaths.... Over the longer-term, the biggest threat to terrorists is not the power of missiles—it is the politics of inclusion.”

True enough, but how to achieve the secretary’s aim?

This reluctant return to battle over Iraq and now Syria must be different from past campaigns. Use of force must be clearly associated with protecting the vulnerable, and unreasonable care should be paid to preventing noncombatant casualties. More generally, the historical cycle of U.S. indifference and inaction interspersed with periodic detonations of violent intervention must be broken.

Islamic extremism is an idea, not an army. The United States can continue to play whack-a-mole in Yemen, Somalia and within the haphazard territory ISIS has created for itself within the fading borderlines drawn by the Sykes-Picot Agreement, but it can never defeat a state of mind with more missiles. On the contrary, the perception of Western persecution feeds this viral ideology.

The breakdown of political and social order in Iraq and Syria must be understood within a complex of competing tribal, regional, religious and economic interests that at this moment appear intractable. With war-planning commandeering U.S. attention at the Pentagon, are the State Department and Obama administration devoting as much energy and analysis to the campaigns on nonmilitary fronts that could make the essential difference this time?

The battle in the skies over Iraq and Syria can only be one part of a multilateral offensive against terror, one regrettably abetted by squadrons of fighter-bombers, but primarily conducted by politicians pursuing a comprehensive political and economic strategy to contain ISIS, prosecute its agents and buttress Sunni communities in Iraq willing to resist it. That will mean responding to the justified grievances of Iraq’s Sunni minority; defusing the social and cultural forces that drive young people into ISIS-mediated nihilism; and economically isolating this quasi-state and exposing its supporters in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and elsewhere.

It should mean vigorously pursuing a diplomatic offensive in conjunction with renewed military pressure that is willing to include all parties to the conflict, including Syria’s Bashar al-Assad and even representatives from ISIS, if they can be peeled away from the group’s bloody resolve. And no issue, including the redrawing of the tattered Middle Eastern map, Kurdish independence, the disbursement of oil revenue and Sunni provincial autonomy, should be off the table.



## REPLY ALL

### Marriage Justice

Re “Remarriage, Mercy and Law,” by The Editors (9/22): As a Catholic happily living in a sacramental marriage, I deeply value the indissoluble nature of that union. But my limited experience of people who have divorced is that almost always the divorce was inevitable, or one party was innocent. There is nothing less convenient than a divorce—who would go through that for anything other than a complete and intolerable breakdown of the relationship? How can mercy not be extended to people who go through that and then find love again?

There also is a social justice angle, I think. Divorce is far more common among low-income families because a lack of economic stability makes it so difficult to keep a marriage together. While I think it is vital for the church to strongly advocate for social and economic conditions that will reduce divorce among the poor, it is also important that the poor aren't being disproportionately excluded from the table of the Lord because of the situations they find themselves in—not because they are less moral but because they often have so many more crosses to bear. Marriage is a social justice is-

#### STATUS UPDATE

Readers respond to “Remarriage, Mercy and Law,” by The Editors (9/22).

I'm all for mercy, and I applaud the pope's marrying couples that had cohabited or even experienced divorce, but annulment was part of that. I'm not sure how, theologically, you skip annulment. Reform the annulment process; it's arduous and sometimes beyond arduous. But I know too many people who have also experienced great healing from the process of annulment—and in some cases

sue, and until we make it so, there will be no renewal of family life.

ABIGAIL WOODS-FERREIRA  
*Online Comment*

### God's Children

Re “A Complicated Grief,” by Kerry Weber (9/22): Having, along with my wife, suffered through three miscarriages, I know the emotional pain that tugs at our hearts during a problem or risky pregnancy can feel like torture. Years later, as a widower, I share a different sense of grief and joy, believing that my wife has already met these three children. How do you find the joy in the midst of sadness? Our baptismal faith is a central part of that joy, whether the death we hold close is a child, a too-young spouse or our elderly family members. Ms. Weber's story of Marian Elizabeth has touched me, and I am certain many other readers; it reminds me of the child of my good friends, Emily, whose genetic difficulty led to a life of only a few hours, too. The fact that Emily continues to shape the lives of those who hold her family dear, just as Marian Elizabeth has a story to be told again and again, stands as proof that these children continue to help in the unfolding of God's creation, sacramentally transforming those who pause to consider their short lives and the profound love of these parents for each

have been helped to identify patterns so they did not repeat them. Mercy is valuable, always, but how we define it matters.

ELIZABETH SCALIA

Divorces create new families. To exclude from the sacraments a person serving their family in love does more to discredit the newly configured family than it does to legitimate the first one. Celebrate families and the love they engender, even the ones that do not follow the patterns we thought and taught were ideal.

FORREST TODD PARKINSON

child, and of Jesus for these parents who held their daughters but briefly, but forever in their hearts. Thank you for sharing this poignant love story.

(DEACON) JIM GROGAN  
*Freehold, N.J.*

### Natural Love

In “Make Room at the Debate” (9/15), Helen Alvaré seems to be setting up multiple straw men. Few people would consider having contraception available under their for-profit employer's health plan as having anything at all to do with the value of motherhood. Many couples who value motherhood seek reliable, modern, safe methods of birth control that are less damaging to the daily rhythms of their married lovemaking. The church's recommended method, “natural” family planning, is unworkable for most couples, at least for those who value married lovemaking as one of the strongest unitive forces available for supporting their marriage. It totally ignores the natural rhythms of lovemaking in most marriages and treats women's natural cycle of libido (which peaks during her most fertile period) as of no importance.

What makes a marriage a sacrament is the love relationship between the spouses, not the biological function of procreation.

The vast majority of Catholic women not only take advantage of modern methods of birth control, but give thanks to God for inspiring human beings to develop this gift to all humankind at precisely the right time in the evolution of human history that it became needed. Who can doubt God's wisdom in this timing?

ANNE CHAPMAN  
*Online Comment*

### Simpler Solution

In “American Exodus” (9/15), Gabriel Romeri asks us to “Imagine if people of all faiths came together to make room” for unaccompanied children coming across our border. Perhaps we could also imagine if the leaders of people

of all faiths had the spiritual depth to competently address the underlying issues that drive the rampant drug usage in the United States. That would do more to solve the violence and refugee problems in Central America than bigger doors and bigger Band-Aids. What if we all preached and practiced, “Live Simply That Others May Simply Live”? Such a radical concept would likely ruffle many comfortable folks.

RICK SHERMAN  
*Online Comment*

### Mysterious Fruit

Father DeSiano asks: “Can it be that people are involved in God’s grace without even the dimmest recognition of it?” This is a good question. Jesus teaches us that to enter the kingdom of God, we must become like little children. I wonder if children are aware of the grace they bring to a given situation. Are they aware of the fruit they produce when they laugh out loud at random or when their eyes fill with tears over situations that many of us might not even notice? Is it possible to be so consumed with love that you are an intentional disciple although you have never been catechized or instructed in the official sense? It is possible that there is a quiet mother somewhere who has given birth to one or two children and who spends her days nurturing them. She seems not to produce much fruit; no one has been converted in her name or by her example except her son or daughter. Is it also possible that because of the love this child received, she goes on to found an order or discover a cure or lay down her life for others? How can we know when someone is producing fruit? It is, perhaps, too beautiful a mystery.

KRISTEN HOFFMASTER  
*Online Comment*

### False Equivalence

John Conley, S.J., misses a couple of important points when he decries the criticism of Israeli policy in “For Israel” (8/4). The United States is in a position

to influence Israeli policy, if our government has the political will to attempt to do so. When a person (or government) has the ability to protect the innocent, there is at least a moral right—if not a moral obligation—to do so, whereas a person (or government) has no comparable duty to act when any action would be pointless. Assad in Syria cares little for U.S. expressions of condemnation of maltreatment of his citizens (absent a credible threat of force). The Saudis may have repressive attitudes toward women, but they are unlikely to change these cultural attitudes in response to U.S. criticism. The Chinese do not care much what the United States thinks about Tibet. But as our closest ally in the Middle East, Israel cannot blithely ignore what Americans believe, if these concerns are expressed vigorously enough. That puts the situation re-

garding Israel in a qualitatively distinct category, which Father Conley should have appreciated in attempting to draw comparisons.

PHILIP ALLEN LACOVARA  
*Sanibel, Fla.*

### Questioning Sources

While I readily admit to a pedestrian knowledge of the recent Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Margot Patterson’s “Gaza Again” (8/4) made some factual statements that were news to me. Ms. Patterson writes, “the kidnappings were not ordered by Hamas leadership but committed by a rogue cell in Hebron.” Where did The Forward, a New York City Jewish daily publication and these “other sources” that Ms. Patterson relies on, get this information?

(DEACON) THOMAS J. GIACOBBE  
*Skillman, N.J.*

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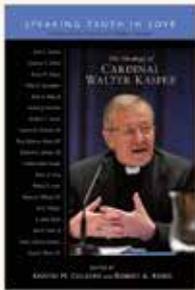
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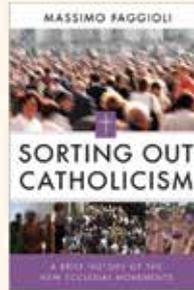
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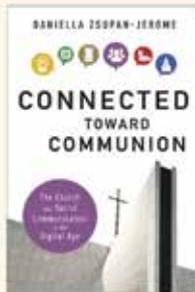


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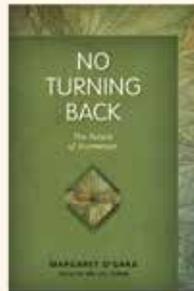
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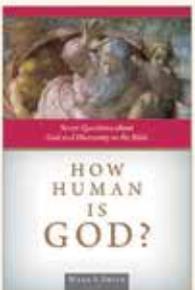
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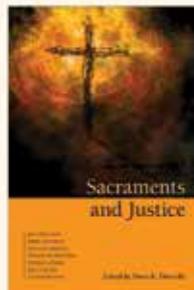
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# SIGNS OF THE TIMES

FROM THE TURKISH BORDER

## Refugees, Fleeing ISIS, Threaten to Overwhelm Turkish Resources

**YAZIDI EXODUS.** These refugees escaping from Iraq into Turkey were joined in September by waves of Syrian Kurds in flight from ISIS.

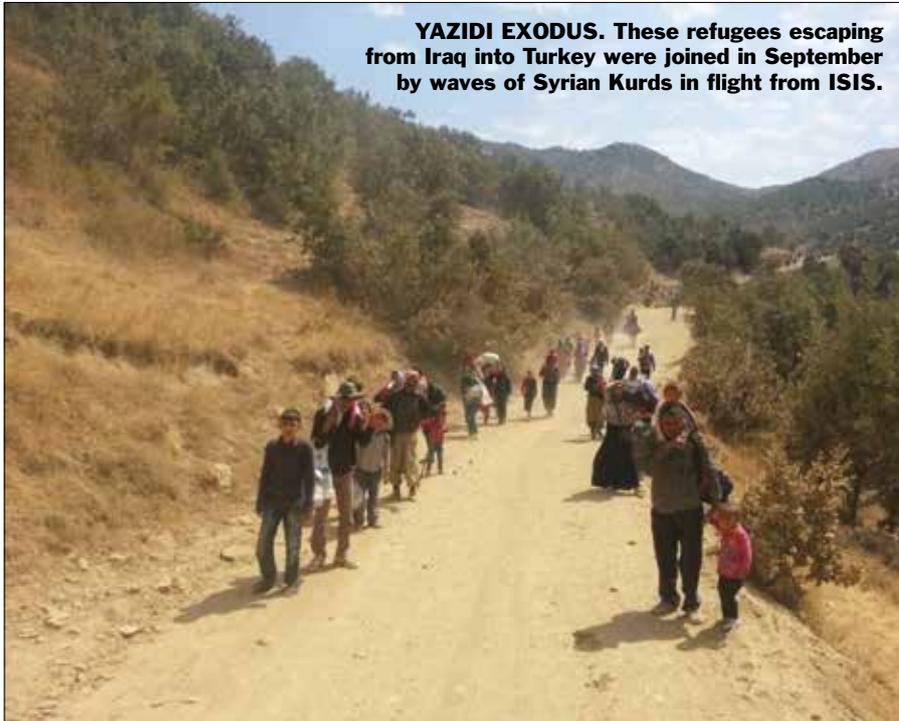


PHOTO: ÜMIT ALGAN

On Sept. 18, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria began a military offensive outside of the Kobane area in northern Syria, and in no time they had terrorized and seized 60 of the surrounding villages. Over the next three days an unprecedented flight of 160,000 refugees escaped across Turkey's southern border. The sudden exodus put the refugee issue back on the international diplomatic front burner, but this time, as one official noted, "The pot is now boiling over and the water is spilling onto the kitchen floor."

Turkey already has more refugees than it can handle. Since the Syrian conflict started in March 2011, about 1.7 million Syrian refugees have escaped into Turkey. When ISIS took control of Mosul in June of this year, as many as 200,000 more Iraqis came, joining tens of thousands of Afghans, Iranians and others. Turkey has now become not only the borderland between Europe and Asia, but the borderland between the violence of the home countries of these refugees and the hope of a better life.

According to official Turkish estimates, the country has already spent \$4 billion responding to the refugee crisis. The rest of the international community has added only \$240 million to help Turkey in this effort. If the town of Kobane falls in the coming weeks, another 300,000 refugees could flee across the Turkish border. In addition to the Muslim Arabs who came over in earlier waves, now many Kurds, Yazidis and Christians are fleeing for their lives because of the violence in their homelands.

I was part of a delegation with the Migration and Refugee Services of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in late September; we heard stories from refugees at the Turkey-Syria border about the reasons they left their homes behind. One Christian Iraqi woman told us, "ISIS came to my village and said either convert or die!" Another left after a neighbor received a package at her doorstep that contained the head of a relative, forcing the whole family to flee in fright.

Only 13 percent of the refugees in Turkey are living in government-run camps. The vast majority have moved into Turkish cities, and, as generous as the current state institutions in Turkey have been, they do not have the mechanisms needed to meet the massive social challenges created by the refugee population. Many recently arrived Iraqi refugees we talked to could not even get an appointment to begin refugee status determination until 2023.

For many refugees, making it across the border into Turkey is only the first step. Complicated issues lie ahead that will involve either integration, return or resettlement. "We are safe in Turkey now," said one Syrian woman, "But our situation is bad. We feel weak, we have many needs, and many people still don't understand what we have lived through."

As world leaders gathered at the United Nations in late September to address ISIS, Ebola and other global threats, I asked a number of refugees what they would say to them.

One teenage girl said, "We feel insecure, and we want you to help make a stable future for us. Please pay attention to what we are going through. All we want is to live in peace again."

A Syrian man who teaches refugee children in Turkey said: "The Syrian war has gone on too long. We want to

go home. We want to return, rebuild our schools and teach our children.”

For those who have been in Turkey as refugees for some time, the feeling of displacement only adds to the agony. In addition to losing his ability to walk because of the fighting, one 25-year-old man said, “What you learn as a refugee is that when you lose your home country, you lose something very precious.”

When asked what they missed most about home, some children pointed to neighbors, friends and their school. But one 12-year-old, notably perplexed by the question, chimed in and said, “I don’t have a house any more.”

Many Iraqis we talked to could not imagine going back home. “Would you? We can’t go back. There is no peace.” Because they know firsthand the effects of rejection and violence, some refugees told us that respect—mutual respect—has been one of the most important things they have learned through their suffering.

While the bombs continue to drop on the ISIS infrastructure, these stories remind all of us that an enormous humanitarian battle still needs to be waged. In a statement on Sept. 23, Pope Francis said the theme for next year’s World Day of Migrants and Refugees is “Church without frontiers, Mother to all.”

He said, “The mission of the church, herself a pilgrim in the world and the Mother of all, is thus to love Jesus Christ, to adore and love him, particularly in the poorest and most abandoned; among these are certainly migrants and refugees, who are trying to escape difficult living conditions and dangers of every kind.” Moreover, his remarks further illumine an understanding of the church as a “field

hospital,” whose mission must be inextricably intertwined with the poor and suffering of the world.

The generous response of the Turkish government, their willingness to adopt magnanimous protection policies and their welcome of these refugees as brothers and sisters in spite of enormous social and finan-



**LOST INNOCENTS.** Exhausted children in flight from ISIS.

cial costs is one bright light in this overwhelming humanitarian crisis. Its leaders have prioritized hospitality over hostility, humanitarian costs over political costs and human solidarity over national and personal fears, even as it tries to manage risks to Turkey’s own security. In some parts along the Turkish border, ISIS-controlled territory is only a few kilometers away. Nonetheless, there is an unflinching recognition on the part of Turkish officials that helping these refugees is a moral imperative, even if it is difficult,

costly, unpopular and risky.

This approach stands in sharp contrast to many U.S. immigration policies and our animosity to those suffering on the other side of our borders. Although the United States has made great strides in refugee resettlement in recent decades, its immigration policies could be more generous and accommodating, especially for those most threatened. Having delayed taking executive action on immigration reform until after elections in November, President Obama was unable to negotiate a humane accommodation for the surge of nearly 63,000 unaccompanied children crossing into the United States from Central America because of the political risks involved.

Worldwide, refugees are the most insecure and vulnerable human beings today. And this issue is not going away anytime soon. The bigger challenge is not just when these refugees will go back home, but how we will learn to live together in our differences, strengthen each other in our suffering and walk together in a common hope.

When our delegation asked a tent full of refugee children what they would say to the president of our country, one 6-year-old—who had undergone much violence himself—paused a moment. Realizing a group of foreigners had just crossed over his borders and entered into his tent space, he raised his hand. As if to answer a deeper, but unasked question, he said, “This place is much more beautiful because of your presence in it.”

**DANIEL GROODY**

*DANIEL GROODY, C.S.C., a consultant to the U.S.C.C.B. Committee on Migration and Refugee Services, is reporting from the Turkish-Syrian border.*

## South Sudan's Bishops Call for End to Conflict

South Sudan's bishops reiterated their call for an end to fighting in their country and warned of a humanitarian disaster. "The fighting and killing must stop immediately and unconditionally," the bishops said on Sept. 25, at the end of a three-day meeting that coincided with the renewal of peace talks in Ethiopia. Last December, conflict erupted between forces loyal to South Sudan President Salva Kiir and those loyal to the rebel leader Riek Machar, Kiir's former vice president. The fighting soon split the country along tribal lines. Thousands of South Sudanese citizens had been killed and hundreds of thousands displaced. The bishops said displaced people were living in appalling conditions and warned that a famine is looming in parts of the country. "Once again we declare this war immoral, and we demand an immediate end to all hostilities so that these humanitarian concerns can be addressed," they said. The bishops urged the international community to continue to support development in the country because "freezing funds meant for development is an invitation to more insecurity and suffering."

## Pope Calls for Unity In Paraguay

After a Vatican investigation, Pope Francis removed a Paraguayan bishop from his post as head of the Diocese of Ciudad del Este because of "serious pastoral reasons." But the bishop shot back later the same day, charging in an open letter that he was the victim of an ideological campaign by Paraguayan bishops in league with Vatican officials. Bishop Rogelio Livieres Plano, 69, was told to step down as head of the diocese, effective Sept. 25. Bishop

## NEWS BRIEFS

Returning to her home in Miami after a month-long assignment to West Africa, **Dr. Aileen Marty**, a former U.S. Navy doctor and expert in infectious diseases, said on Sept. 22 that the deadly Ebola outbreak will be contained only if all ports of entry in the region are adequately screened for infected carriers. • Pope Francis, who has said the Catholic Church has "not yet come up with a profound theology of womanhood," **named five women**, a record number, to the International Theological Commission on Sept. 30. • The former chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Michael Lovell, became the **first lay president** of Marquette University on Sept. 19. • The U.S. bishops' Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities has prepared a packet for the observance in October of **Respect Life Month** that is available online at [www.usccb.org/respectlife](http://www.usccb.org/respectlife). • In a statement during the U.N. Climate Summit on Sept. 23, Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin observed that "**warming of the climate system**...is a very serious problem which...has grave consequences for the most vulnerable sectors of society and, clearly, for future generations."



**Dr. Aileen Marty**

Ricardo Valenzuela Rios of Villarrica del Espiritu Santo will temporarily administer the diocese. A Vatican statement said the "onerous decision" to dismiss Bishop Livieres was made after a "careful examination" of the findings of a Vatican investigation conducted by the congregations for bishops and for clergy. In the exercise of his ministry protecting unity among bishops and the faithful, according to the statement, Pope Francis "asks the clergy and all the people of God" in the diocese to accept the decision "with a spirit of obedience, docility and a neutral attitude."

## Air Strikes Will Aid ISIS

Expanded airstrikes on Islamic State positions in Syria serve as little more than a recruiting tool for extremists and place more innocent people in danger, the leadership of Pax Christi International said on Sept. 23. The

three top leaders of the Catholic peace organization also called upon the world, particularly the United Nations, to work together to seek non-violent alternatives to stop the Islamic State's expansion and influence in Iraq and Syria. Bishop Kevin Dowling of Rustenburg, South Africa and Marie Dennis, Pax Christi International co-presidents, and Jose Henriquez, the organization's secretary-general, proposed alternatives to war, like wide-ranging diplomacy, including direct talks with Islamic State leaders and economic actions aimed at limiting the group's access to millions of dollars in oil revenues that fund weapons purchases. "We believe that especially the expansion of bombing is more likely to create significant recruiting bonanza for some of the extremist groups, ISIS included," Dennis said.

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

DISPATCH | LOS ANGELES

## Faith With Those Fries?

**Y**ou might think the cuisine du jour of Los Angeles would be something trendy or healthy—something out of Mexican or an Asian culture perhaps; definitely something “fusion.” But it turns out the real passion of Angelinos, one that unites the many disparate peoples and tastes of this massive community, is a fast food hamburger joint with a name more suggestive of digestive problems than a White Castle slider.

No matter where you live or whether or not you’ve ever heard of In-N-Out Burger, your life has been affected by them. In 1948, when they were first starting in the L.A. neighborhood of Baldwin Park, the founders Harry and Esther Snyder were able to obtain only 10 square feet of land, nowhere near enough for seating. To make a go of it, Harry created a two-way speaker box and opened California’s first drive-through.

Today there are 286 In-N-Out Burgers in five states. The chain’s owner, Esther and Harry’s 32-year-old granddaughter Lynsi, is the youngest female billionaire in the United States, and its popularity is without parallel in the fast-food world. Drive-through lanes regularly stretch a dozen cars; cherry red seating inside and out teems with a United Nations of customers. Most venues pulse with the kind of nonstop, elbow-to-elbow action and fast-talking cashiers one expects to find rather in the harried realms of the distant East than in the laid-back metropolis of Los Angeles.

In many ways In-N-Out’s success

here is mystifying. You cannot order a salad at In-N-Out. They do not serve lattes, nor a dozen different “combos” in multiple sizes. The official menu has only six items on it: hamburger; cheeseburger or double-double (a two-patty cheeseburger); French fries; milkshakes; soda.

A secret menu, with fun-to-say terms like “Animal Style” or “The Flying Dutchman,” provides a few additional menu items and modifications. But compared to McDonald’s or even

In many ways  
In-N-Out’s success here  
is mystifying.

Subway, In-N-Out remains very much a no-frills operation.

The same goes for its corporate presence. In a town known for its press agents and spin, the management of In-N-Out doesn’t give interviews. Inquiries for this article on even the most banal of topics—How did the secret menu first come about? What kind of training does your staff get? What do you think is the biggest challenge facing the fast-food industry today?—were all politely, repeatedly rebuffed.

The company has an amazing story to tell. Everything it sells is fresh; it has never used trans fats; and nothing is ever microwaved or frozen (except the ice cream in the homemade milkshakes). Chefs from Julia Child to Gordon Ramsay have praised the quality of In-N-Out’s food.

They’re also apparently quite good to their employees. In an industry in which entry-level employees rarely

crack the minimum wage, In-N-Out starts its employees at over \$10 an hour. Managers make over \$100,000 a year plus benefits and performance-based incentives like all-expenses-paid vacations.

Yet despite all those positives, beyond the corporate website and a few facts and figures on In-N-Out food wrappers, the company refuses to promote itself. It has no celebrity spokesperson, no commercials gone viral or staged events. In-N-Out just makes hamburgers, and people show up.

The Hollywood ending to a story like this has the company overcoming cocky fast-food super-conglomerates to win some international hamburger contest or Charlton Heston racing into frame screaming about secret ingredients.

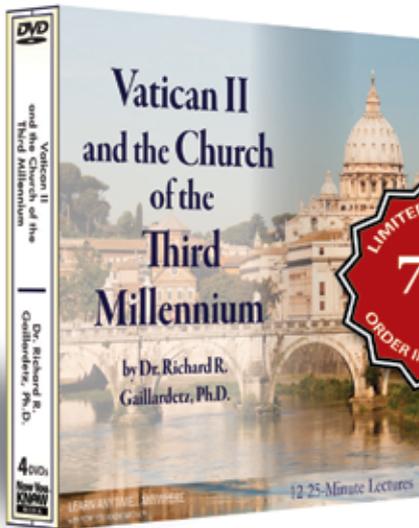
But much like its popularity in Los Angeles, the final twist on In-N-Out is anything but the expected. Check any wrapper, any paper cup or fry boat from In-N-Out and you will find somewhere, in small type, a citation from Scripture. The inside of the bottom rim of one milkshake cup has “Prov 3:5” (“Trust in the Lord with all thy heart”); at the edge of the burger wrapper, “Rev 3:20” (“Behold, I stand at the door and knock”).

The company offers no explanation for the Scripture citations (of course). Perhaps they are a quiet means of evangelization or a moment of grateful praise for all the success the business has known.

Or perhaps it’s a kind of blessing on the meal and all those who will eat it, people from all walks of life whose paths do not otherwise cross, that elsewhere in the world might even be in mortal conflict. Here they sit, cheek by jowl, all together, relishing their lunch.

JIM McDERMOTT

JIM McDERMOTT, S.J., is *America’s Los Angeles correspondent*. Twitter: @jmcidsj.



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# Confronting the Caliphate

**I**ts new war on the Islamic State puts the United States in the middle of the multiplying fault lines in the Middle East. Polls show that most Americans support it but doubt it will be any more successful than our previous war in Iraq, which bred instability and the Sunni jihadists overrunning Syria and Iraq whom we are now seeking to destroy. I turned to an array of Mideast scholars and experts to learn more about the mission the United States has set itself.

A few facts: An offshoot of Al Qaeda, the Islamic State, known as I.S., ISIS or ISIL, is now being defined as much or more by its differences from Al Qaeda as by its similarities. Unlike Al Qaeda, I.S. seeks to gain and hold territory. It is a transnational movement that threatens the existing regional order and thus the global economy. I.S. is smart, media-savvy and rich, taking over banks, businesses and oil fields in the area it administers. About four million people now live in areas I.S. controls, where it acts as a state, providing security and social services. According to Haroon Ullah, who serves on Secretary of State John Kerry's policy planning staff, it is the largest extremist organization in the world.

In proclaiming itself a caliphate, the Islamic State signaled it does not recognize the borders of the existing nations in the region but wants to incorporate these nations within itself. The jihadists seek to provoke a massive military intervention from the West like the one that brought down the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

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MARGOT PATTERSON is a writer who lives in Kansas City, Mo.

While many Americans view Islam as a violent religion, studies show that the primary drivers of Islamic terrorism are political. In fact, a high proportion of people in I.S., higher even than in Al Qaeda, are religious novices who know little about Islam. They see themselves as purifying the Islamic world, but their tactics and behavior are so clearly un-Islamic that they have little credibility as Muslims. What I.S. does offer, however, is a powerful change narrative. In Syria, where I.S. is the most brutal and effective opposition group, it is unifying people who would not naturally be unified.

What are the challenges in mounting a coalition against I.S.? They begin with the question of whether the United States should lead it, the unresolved contradictions in U.S. policy—the strongest foes of I.S. are Iran, Hezbollah and the Assad regime, parties the United States treats as enemies—the fact that military might alone cannot defeat an ideology and the fractured nature of the coalition the United States is assembling.

Authoritarian countries like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt are now waging an undeclared war on moderate Islamists—especially the Muslim Brotherhood—whom they see as a greater threat to their hold on power than extremists. The actions they are taking to suppress dissent at home threaten to fuel radicalization and terrorism at a faster rate than they are fighting it. They reinforce the argument made by I.S. that an Islamic state can only come about through violence.

The United States has to go beyond blunt militarism or the narrow counterterrorism approach outlined in the president's speech, Mideast experts say.

"We are trying to once again apply air power to a problem or set of problems that it can't resolve," said Chas W. Freeman, a retired diplomat who served as U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia during the Desert Storm and Desert Shield operations. "I think the so-called Islamic State is a serious threat that has to be addressed, but putting the United States in the lead to do so is a mistake and will not work."

At a minimum, the coalition needs significant buy-in from Arab allies. "It's going to have to look like a Western/Arab/

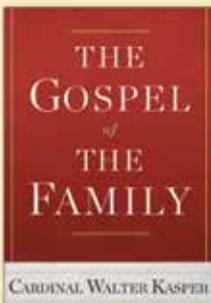
Muslim armada," said John Esposito, chair of Georgetown University's center for Christian-Muslim understanding. "Then they're going to have to be very strategic in what they do. You cannot have this look like a primarily U.S.-led intervention and have a lot of collateral damage."

If all goes well, will the war against I.S. be enough to staunch the further disintegration of the region? As long as the violence continues in Iraq and Syria, probably not. While the United States and its allies can militarily degrade I.S., that won't be sufficient to create peace or stability. Unfortunately, despite the 200,000 people killed there, neither the United States nor those waging a proxy war in Syria seem serious about ending it.

The United States has to go beyond blunt militarism.



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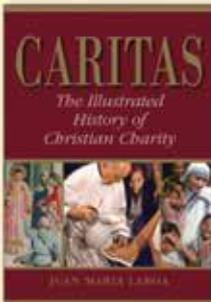
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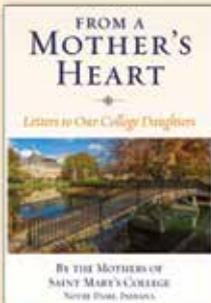
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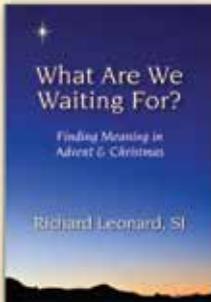
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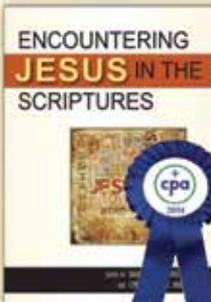
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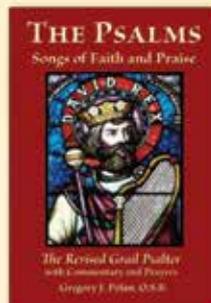


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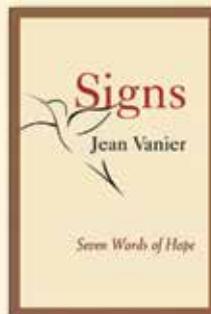


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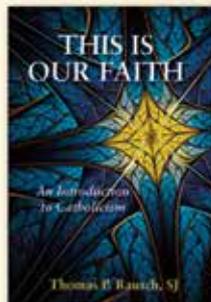


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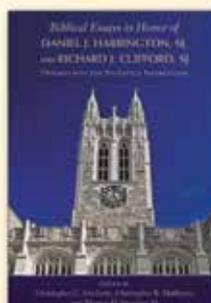


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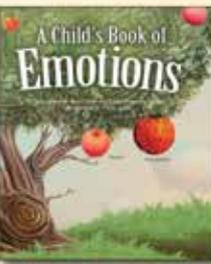


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# Preferential Options

‘Vanguard’ experiments in fighting poverty

BY PAUL RYAN

*Editor’s Note: This article is the first in a two-part series. We asked two prominent members of Congress, both Catholics with famous names, to respond to Pope Francis’ repeated calls to empower the poor. The second response, by Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy III, Democrat of Massachusetts, is online and will appear in print on Oct. 20.*

Some years before he became Pope Francis, Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio was talking with a friend about serving the poor. When helping people in need, he said, his first concern was material: “Are you hungry? Here, here is something to eat.” But poverty isn’t just a form of deprivation; it’s also a form of isolation. People always need to eat, and often they need something more, like a teacher or a job. In other words, they need other people. So “the poor must not be perpetually marginalized,” the cardinal warned. Instead, “we [must] integrate them into our community.”

I could not agree more. There is a lot of untapped potential in this country; I have seen it firsthand. In the past two years, I have traveled to 10 different communities that are fighting poverty every day, from a homeless shelter in Denver to a rehab center in San Antonio. Every person I have met has had a different story. But every story they have told has had the same message: Once people find a niche and put down roots, they draw strength from the people around them and they grow. So to expand opportunity in this country, we have to bring the poor back into our communities. And the safety net can serve as the missing link by helping people find work.

## Market and Government

Before we can repair the safety net, we have to repair the thinking behind it. In all these debates over poverty, people tend to think there are two competing principles at work: the market and the government. In other words, people think you have to pin all your hopes on either private charity or public assistance. That is a false choice—because both the market and the government are tools. We use them for our own purposes. And we should make them work together to

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HON. PAUL RYAN, *the Republican chairman of the House Budget Committee, is an eight-term member of Congress from Wisconsin’s 1st Congressional District.*

enhance human dignity. So the question is not whether we should use the market or the government; it is how to use them both. And one of my guides is Catholic social teaching. Instead of two competing principles, I rely on two complementary principles: solidarity and subsidiarity.

Solidarity is a shared commitment to the common good. It is the belief that we are all in this together, so we should look out for each other, both in our private lives and in our public policy. As St. Paul once wrote, “If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy” (1 Cor 12:26). Our goal, then, is to foster a healthy economy, one that promotes the most talented and protects the most vulnerable. This is what we mean by a preferential option for the poor. Just as a doctor heals a wound to help the whole body, we take care of people in need because the whole country will benefit.

Subsidiarity, meanwhile, is a prudent deference to the people closest to the problem. Whenever there is hardship—whether it is unemployment, addiction or illness—we first look to the people on the ground to solve it because they know their communities best. They know the simple but vital facts: Who is looking for a job? Who is hiring? What skills are in demand? And only when the community is unable to solve the problem on its own do we ask the government to step in. And even then, government must work with the people in the community, not against them.

Every public policy should strike a balance between these two principles. Too much solidarity would blind us to our different needs. And too much subsidiarity would blind us to our shared goals. These principles are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they are mutually reinforcing. If solidarity is the team spirit, then subsidiarity is the game plan. We have to remember that though each part of our country looks out for the whole, each part makes a different contribution to the whole. As St. Paul wrote, “If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?” (1 Cor 12:17).

## Confronting ‘Deep’ Poverty

Good Catholics can disagree over how to strike that balance, and we do. But in the fight against poverty, I think we can all agree that we can do better. Each year, the federal government spends almost \$800 billion on at least 92 different programs to help people in need. And yet the poverty rate is



**SUCCESS STORY.** Michael Gordon, left, has become a manager for a furniture bank run by Caritas, an agency providing services to homeless people in Richmond, Va.

CNS PHOTO/JAY PAUL

the highest in a generation. Over the last three years, deep poverty has been the highest on record. The fact is, too many families are living paycheck to paycheck. They are working harder and harder to get ahead, and yet they are falling further and further behind.

And we have to understand why. Today, technology is changing constantly—and with it the global economy. But the rest of our society has not kept up. Everything from our education system to our safety net still works according to bureaucratic formulas set in the 20th century. So many of our people do not have the skills they need to compete in the 21st century. They cannot find work, and as a result, they cannot take part.

And because the federal government is so disorganized and dysfunctional, Washington is in many ways deepening the divide: It is not helping people get back into the workforce; in fact, it is effectively encouraging them to stay out. Many federal programs are means-tested, so as families earn more money, they get less aid. Any system that concentrates aid on the most vulnerable will face this tension. But the current system exacerbates it by layering on program after program without ensuring any coordination among them.

Take an example: a single mom with one child. Imagine she

works full-time year-round for \$7.25 an hour (or \$15,080 a year). To give you some perspective, she is making just below the poverty line for a family of two, which was \$15,730 in 2014. Now imagine she is offered a raise to \$10.35 an hour (or \$21,528 a year). If she accepts, much of her federal aid will instantly disappear. At this point, thanks to higher taxes and lower benefits, she will effectively keep only 10 cents of every extra dollar she earns. So the federal government is effectively discouraging her from getting ahead.

This is a crucial flaw in the safety net—one that demands correction. “There is no worse dispossession,” Cardinal Bergoglio himself said years ago, “than not being able to earn one’s own bread, than being denied the dignity of work.” The status quo does not respect the dignity of work, and that is why it is unacceptable.

What we need to do is coordinate aid to families in need. We need to get the public and private sector pulling in the same direction, so we can smooth the transition from assistance to success. Each person’s needs fit into a coherent whole: a career. And each person fits into a coherent whole: a community. So if the public and private sector work together, we can offer a more personalized, customized form of aid—one that recognizes both a person’s needs and their strengths.

## Opportunity Awaits

I do not have all the answers. Nobody does. But I do think we can build a safety net that embraces both the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. I would begin by starting a pilot program, which I would call the Opportunity Grant. It would consolidate up to 11 federal programs into one stream of funding to participating states. The idea would be to let states try different ways of providing aid and then to test the results—in other words, more flexibility in exchange for more accountability. Participation would be voluntary; no state would have to join. And we would not expand the program until we had tested a number of different approaches and gathered all the evidence.

Here is how it would work. Each state that wanted to participate would submit a plan to the federal government. That plan would lay out in detail the state's proposed alternative. If everything passed muster, the federal government would give the green light. And the state would get more flexibility to combine programs such as food stamps, housing subsidies, child-care assistance and cash welfare.

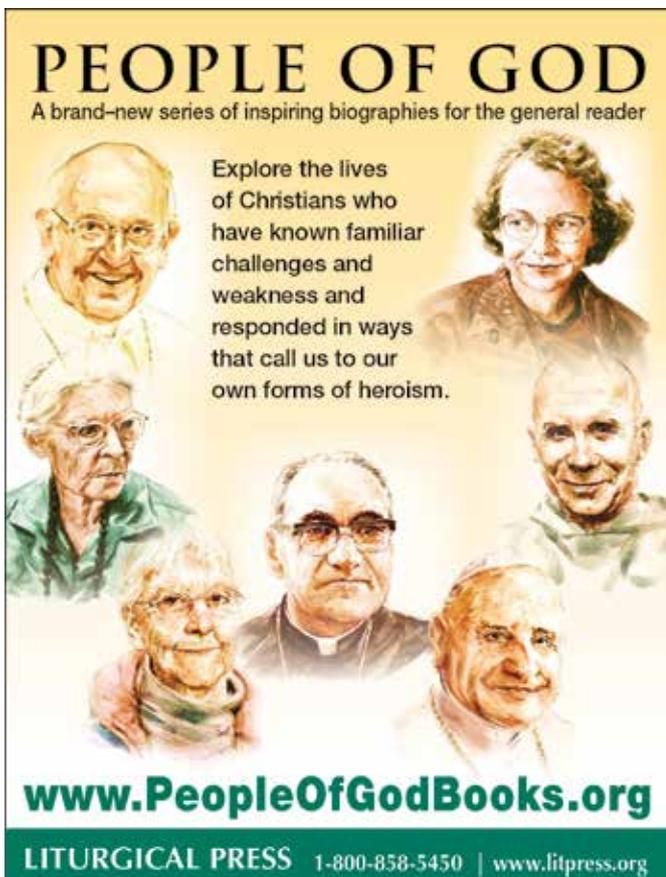
The federal government would grant approval on four conditions. First, the state would have to spend all the funding on people in need; it could not use that money on other priorities like roads or bridges. Second, the state would have to maintain work requirements and time limits for every able-bodied recipient—just as there are for cash welfare to-

day. Third, the state would have to offer at least two service providers. The state welfare agency could not be the only game in town. And fourth, the state would have to measure progress through a neutral third party.

If approved, the state could use that money to expand state programs and to partner with local service providers. So families in need would have a choice. There would not just be a state agency or a federal agency. Instead, they could choose among non-profits like Catholic Charities USA, for-profits like America Works or even community groups unique to their neighborhood. And instead of offering a bunch of different benefits, these groups could offer a more holistic form of aid through case management.

Earlier this year, I saw the benefits of case management in action when I met a woman at Catholic Charities in Racine, Wis. When she first came to Catholic Charities, she was homeless and unemployed. So she sat down with a caseworker and put together a life plan. With the caseworker's help, she and her fiancé each found work, and now she is earning her degree in health management. The point is, with someone to coordinate her aid, she did not just find a job; she started a career.

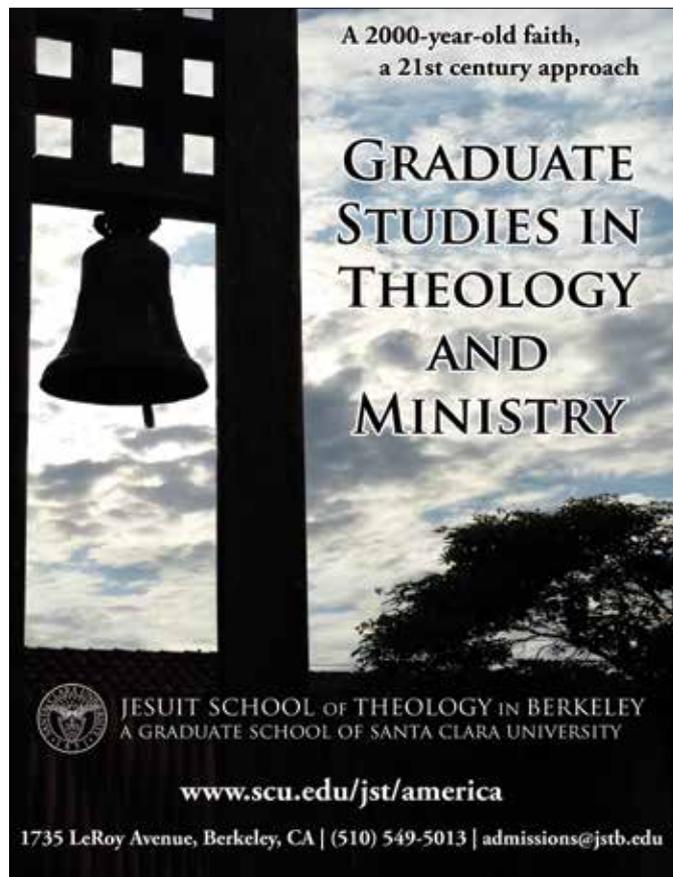
The woman told me one of the most important things her caseworker did was give her advice. She had received a number of federal benefits before, but she never knew how to manage them all. With the case manager's help, she learned



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how to write a budget and stick to it. Catholic Charities gave her greater control over her life, and now she is getting her life back on track.

### 'Reconceiving' Government

Under the Opportunity Grant, states could partner with a number of local service providers, so we could have more such success stories. I would not force states to use case management. I mean only to highlight one promising model. States would have to maintain work requirements and time limits, but they would be free to use whatever methods they preferred as long as they tested the results. Not everyone would need case management, and states would have the flexibility to provide different types of aid for people in different circumstances.

And all this time, a neutral third party would keep tabs on each provider and its success rate. This third party would keep track of key metrics: How many people are finding jobs? How many people are getting off assistance? How many people are moving out of poverty? Any provider who came up short could no longer participate. And at the end of the program, we would pool the results and go from there.

So I would reconceive the federal government's role. No longer would it try to supplant our local communities. Instead it would try to support them. It would work hand in hand with community groups like Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services and others. In my view, the federal government would be the rearguard; it would protect the supply lines. But the people in our communities would be the vanguard; they would fight poverty on the front lines. They would lead this effort, and Washington would follow their lead.

Under my proposal, people could use federal aid to get from where they are to where they want to be: a new job, a new neighborhood, a new life. By channeling the market forces of choice and competition, government could help get people back in the hustle and bustle of life.

In short, we would have a stronger, more stable safety net, based on the twin principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. By drawing more attention to people in need, we would maintain the principle of solidarity. And we would revive the principle of subsidiarity by harnessing the knowledge of our local communities.

I understand that not everybody, nor every Catholic, will agree with my proposal. But at the very least, I hope to start a conversation. I will be the first to acknowledge there is plenty of room for debate. But I hope we all recognize, as Pope Francis has said, we have to make room for families in need. We have to welcome them back into our communities—because that is where they belong, and that is where they can take root and flourish. ■



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# A Greater Reality

Faith, the final frontier

BY THOMAS A. CAHILL

Imagine this: Against long odds, you, a midcareer anthropologist working with four other university teams, have gained grant support from the U.S. National Science Foundation and permission from the government of Brazil to be the sole research team allowed to investigate a newly discovered tribe of Amazon Indians deep in the remotest jungle. This tribe has had no contact with any Western peoples and little contact with equally remote neighboring tribes, with whom they have had unpleasant and even warlike encounters. The tribe has its own language and has built up a considerable population that controls significant areas of the jungle, and has probably done so for centuries.

The conditions of your unique access are draconian, however. There must be no contact whatsoever between your research team and any member of the tribe. For this reason, all surveillance will be done at long range, using high-tech equipment like powerful automatic cameras, carefully camouflaged, and long-range microphones.

Moving cautiously and guided by surreptitious flyovers of ultralight drone aircraft with infrared sensing capabilities, your research team is able to arrive unseen at the edge of the tribe's territory and locate a village across a river that, as far as you can determine from the surveillance, is never crossed by the tribe members. On a low bluff across the river, you set up your equipment and begin recording the sights and sounds of the village.

One day, several months later, you download the week's

data on your iPad. But on the way back from checking your equipment, you slip and fall on the rough, barely visible track you follow to access the monitoring site. Your iPad slips unnoticed out of your backpack and into the brush.

In the village, a key ingredient of the poison sap used to



stun fish is running low. One villager is chosen to cross the river and access the rare trees that produce this sap. Tracking through the jungle, the villager comes across this weird object in the brush, unlike anything he has ever seen before. Racked with fear and uncertainty, he picks it up in a large leaf so as not to touch it and runs back to his canoe and crosses the river to his village.

Meanwhile, there is panic among the members of the research team. They race back to find the iPad only to see a villager pick it up and head back across the river. The loss of the iPad is such a gross violation of the terms of the grant and access that the entire project is terminated.

After some discussion the village decides it wants noth-

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THOMAS A. CAHILL is a professor of physics and atmospheric sciences at the University of California, Davis.

COMPOSITE PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/AMERICA

ing to do with this object, and it is carried across some miles to where the tribe's chief shaman resides. The shaman contemplates this object, using a keen intelligence that is in no way inferior to that of the now-disgraced research scientist who lost the iPad. While the tribe knows about metals from the native copper deposits in the nearby hills, the metal of the iPad is different, smoother, shiny, unlike anything the shaman has ever seen. He also knows of transparent crystals, clear topazes found in deposits on the riverbanks, but the screen he sees is far beyond anything like that. Thus he concludes that there is some "Greater Reality" out there capable of making this object, whose existence is undeniable but whose nature can be learned only by contemplation of the iPad and intelligent speculation.

### **The Foundations of the Universe**

So it is with physics today, where the existence of the Big Bang that started our universe roughly 14.73 billion years ago cannot be denied. At the Big Bang, there came simultaneously into existence the four foundations of our universe: time, space, all the energy of the universe and the laws of physics and its fundamental free parameters. These laws are sweeping philosophical statements, like "the laws of physics are the same throughout the universe" or "the laws of physics are constant in time." These lead to the great conservation statements: "Energy-mass is conserved in all interactions." But the laws of our four-dimensional universe do not allow for the Big Bang.

Albert Einstein said that "the most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is at all comprehensible." He said this well before the stunning discoveries of the last half of the 20th century that have pushed physics and its ancillary disciplines to the very frontiers of space and time. What we found has laid a whole new foundation for belief that has shaken the natural skepticism of many of the most profound thinkers in physics. The Big Bang violates almost every law that physics has uncovered. Thus, it is certain that there has to be a "Greater Reality" able to spawn our universe that is not limited by the laws of our tangible universe.

Returning to our shaman, in the course of handling the iPad, he turns it on by accident and sees on the screen scenes of the villagers that very morning, with their speech and actions recorded over several hours. As he slides his hand on the screen, more images from previous days appear, showing that the Greater Reality was observing their village life over weeks, even months.

What is he to make of this? Obviously the object has internal capabilities that are simply beyond anything the tribe can conceive. Equally he suspects that the technology of the device is so advanced that the Greater Reality could probably have destroyed the village if it so wished. But the careful surveillance certainly shows that the Greater Reality was interested in the tribe and took great care not to interfere with the tribe; otherwise the surveillance would have been discovered months ago. That such care was taken at least hints that the Greater Reality cares for the tribe and protects them from this alien knowledge that alone could destroy the careful fabric of the tribe's existence.

So it is with our universe. We have discovered that the laws of physics also include parameters, roughly 30 in number, that tie the laws to the physical universe. The statement "The laws of physics are constant in systems moving at constant relative velocity" is the principle of relativity, whose key constant is the speed of light in a vacuum,  $c$ , roughly 187,000 miles per second. This parameter appears again in Einstein's mass-energy relationship: energy equals mass times the speed of light squared,  $c^2$ —which is absolutely key to the energy of stars and how long they can burn. These 30 or so constants cannot be predicted but must be measured. All evidence shows that these laws and their fundamental parameters, once established, span all of space and time and have not changed since that instance. Physics shows a one-way universe that proceeds according to the arrow of time to a demise in the grey death of entropy, the big rip of dark energy or other means as yet unknown.

Thus, like the shaman, we are faced with the certain existence of a Greater Reality that can never be approached through the scientific method, since no measurements are even conceivable outside of our universe. We can only learn of the nature of the Greater Reality through intelligent speculation: scientific, philosophical or theological speculation guided by our native intelligence and the nature of the observable universe, unless the Greater Reality chooses to intercede.

### **A Garden of Spirit**

The discoveries of the past 30 years show that the laws of our universe are exquisitely crafted so as to allow, even demand, the development of carbon-based life on Earth-like planets around other stars that, every week, grow in number. That such laws occur by accident is statistically impossible, meaning that in trillions of random universes with slight differences in the 30 fundamental parameters of physics, not one

**We are faced with the certain existence of a Greater Reality that can never be approached through the scientific method, since no measurements are even conceivable outside of our universe.**

would have the right combination for life to occur. As one of 30 examples, if the speed of light—“c”—were very slightly greater, the sun and other main sequence stars would burn out so fast that evolution would not have enough time to evolve sentient beings. A slightly smaller “c” would not allow most stars to burn at all, thus vastly reducing the number of planets that could exist in the zone of liquid water, which is essential to carbon-based life.

Clearly our Greater Reality is not random but is coded so that life and intelligence can evolve, given enough time and favorable conditions. One of the benefits of this approach is that one can never view the stars at night as simply a cold, sterile collection of hot plasma spheres. What one is looking at is an enormous garden, a garden of life, a garden of intelligence, a garden of spirit. The evolved creatures on other planets may not look like us physically, but they and we have a level of intelligence that can discover the laws and secrets of the universe. They and we can value non-physical spiritual realities like truth, love, honor and beauty. So we can modify Einstein’s statement to read: The most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that *we exist to discover* that it is at all comprehensible.

The simplest explanation for the recent discoveries of physics is an all-powerful and intelligent Creator, the dreaded “strong anthropic principle.” One can achieve the same results via the “weak anthropic principle,” in that one of the in-

conceivably large number of parallel universes possible, but unprovable, via M theory might by statistical chance have the right parameters for life. This explanation shows such an ugly inefficiency that I find it unattractive, while it only kicks the conceptual can farther down the road and requires the spawning of trillions upon trillions of universes, not just one, to get intelligent life.

I believe that the Creator, having gone to such enormous and careful efforts to craft a universe designed for intelligent life, would, like any gardener, carefully cultivate and encourage the fruits of the land, with spiritual intervention, indirect and direct. The Creator, to continue the gardener analogy, also expects a harvest. I propose that the harvest is the fruits of the spirit, love, honor, beauty and so forth from freely choosing intelligent beings that are able to discern that the Creator exists and cares for us and, as a corollary, are able to actively care for all of creation and especially our fellow sentient beings. So we, if we choose wisely, can be the harvest and can bring back to the Creator the one thing that the Creator cannot do, the one aspect of creation that is not defined by the immutable laws of science—the spiritual fruits of freely choosing beings, and their lifetime of love of the Creator and fellow intelligent beings, and love and protection of all of creation. I believe that the new physics in the past 30 years has laid a firm foundation of fact that supports, and does not challenge, Christian belief. **A**

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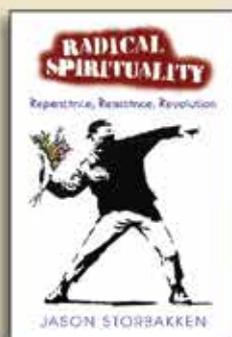


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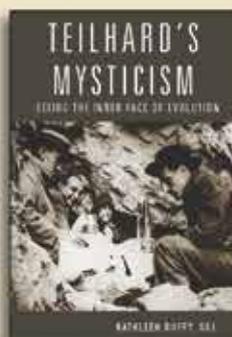
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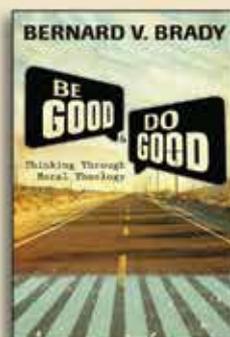


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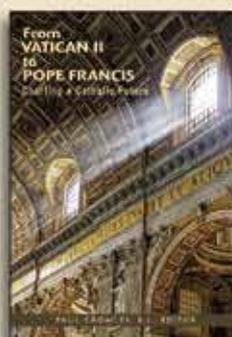
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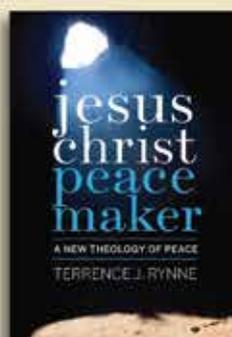


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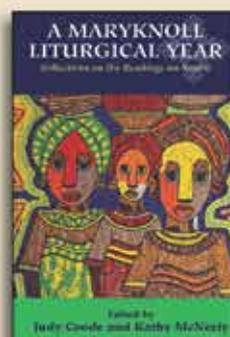


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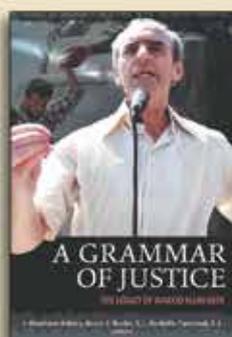
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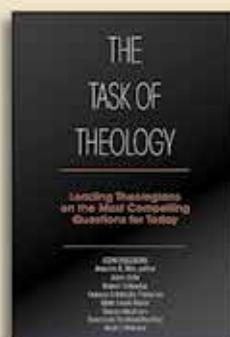
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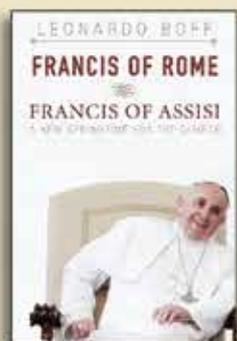


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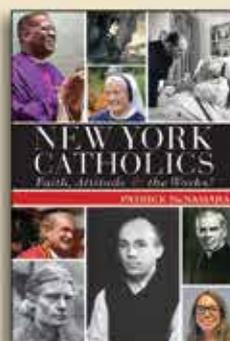
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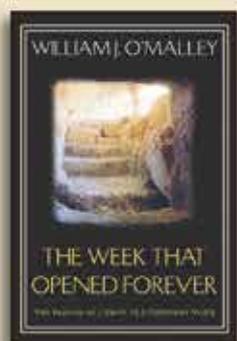
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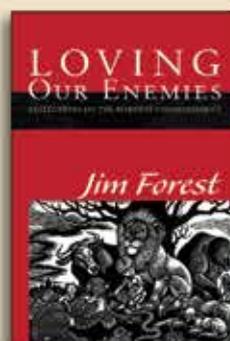


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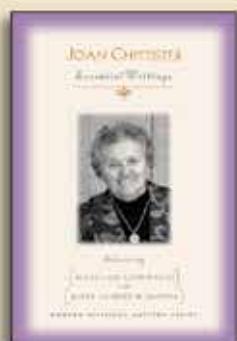


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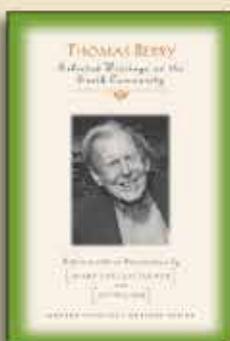
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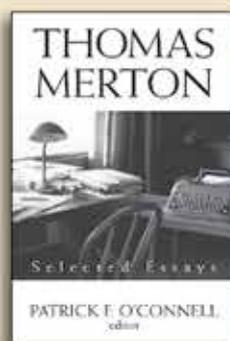
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# Francis the Diplomat

Pope Francis has a highly original approach to problems in the diplomatic field. This has emerged clearly in public on at least two separate occasions over the past six months; first in relation to Israel and Palestine and, more recently, in relation to China.

In this week's Vatican Dispatch I want to take a first look at Francis' originality, as I think it may help us understand a little better how he operates in other fields too as he governs the universal church.

The originality, I believe, comes from the great inner freedom he enjoys, which is also a fruit of his Jesuit spirituality. Francis is not hidebound by traditions, customs or structures—however ancient or modern—that are not an essential part of the Gospel. He is not afraid to jettison them if they are not serving a good purpose or achieving the end for which they first came into existence.

His personal history shows he has always had a significant level of inner freedom, and this enabled him to act in some highly original ways both as Jesuit provincial superior in Argentina (1973-79) and during 21 years as bishop in Buenos Aires.

What strikes me most, however, is that since becoming pope 18 months ago, he seems to enjoy a much greater degree of inner freedom and originality. I would dare to say that there is no world leader today truly free like him, or as original. His inner freedom enables him to courageously think out-

side the box and act in unprecedented ways that traditional diplomacy might eschew.

We saw this clearly last May when, bypassing the Vatican's diplomatic channels, he made direct contact with the presidents of Israel and Palestine through the intermediary of a Spanish-speaking Israeli TV reporter, Henrique Cymerman, whom he met for the first time on June 13, 2013, when the reporter interviewed him in the Vatican.

Francis is a strategist, with a particular gift for spotting people who may be able to help him achieve his goal in a particular area. Once identified, he deals directly with that person. As I explained in my first post on *America's* blog *In All Things* (5/24), this is what happened when he discovered that Cymerman has direct contact with the Israeli and Palestinian leaders. He used him as a trusted intermediary to help him bring about the historic meeting to pray for peace in the Holy Land in the Vatican gardens on June 6 with President Shimon Peres of Israel and the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. That event was the direct fruit of the Jesuit pope's original initiative.

We saw another of his "thinking outside the box" diplomatic initiatives in early September, when Francis tapped Argentine intermediaries to give a personal letter to President Xi Jinping of China, inviting him to meet to discuss world peace.

Ever since his election, the Jesuit pope has been looking for a way to open a substantial conversation with

the Chinese leadership and bridge the 63-year-old divide between the Holy See and China. He believes this would be to the benefit of humanity. He knows that Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI tried in various ways to resolve the differences using traditional Vatican diplomacy but without success. Francis wants to explore other routes.

As I explained in my blog post of Sept. 17, Francis tapped two Argentinians who claimed to have access to the highest levels of China's leadership for this delicate task: Ricardo Romano, a leader of Argentina's Justicialist Party (the main Peronist party in Congress), accompanied by José Lujan, a representative of the

There is no world leader today truly free like Francis.

Academy of Chinese Sciences to Mercosur.

Francis had a 90-minute meeting with them on Sept. 3 and gave them a signed, sealed letter, which they took to Beijing and handed over to a Chinese diplomat, designated by China's government, who is said to enjoy the confidence of President Xi Jinping.

Surprisingly, however, on Sept. 16, the lead intermediary, on his own initiative, revealed the story to an online news outlet in Buenos Aires. A senior Vatican diplomat told me he is concerned that this may be counterproductive, as China could misinterpret the publicizing of what was meant to be a confidential initiative. Francis has not commented; he's praying for a breakthrough.

GERARD O'CONNELL

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GERARD O'CONNELL is *America's* Rome correspondent. *America's* Vatican coverage is sponsored in part by the Jesuit communities of the United States. Twitter: @gerryorome.

# Remain Here With Me

Recovering from the trauma of rape

BY JOAN MILLER

Six years ago I boarded a plane to Italy and left my family, friends and boyfriend of three years for what I imagined would be an amazing study-abroad experience. For months it was just that. I enjoyed traveling around Europe, immersing myself in Italian city-life, culture and cuisine. As my study abroad experience came to an end, my American cohort was invited by a friend of a friend to join him at his family hotel for the weekend. I felt grateful for one more adventure and for the experience of living abroad, knowing it had changed me. I did not yet know that the weekend at the hotel would change me too.

When we arrived, we were welcomed by the young man who had invited us. Later that night he raped me. Afterward, I was left stunned and was filled with a fear I did not know I was capable of feeling. I limped through the rest of the weekend in pained silence. When I finally returned to my apartment I immediately called my parents. I was frantic, and the magnitude of the trauma began to settle in.

As I dialed their phone number, I had no doubt that my parents' reaction would be one of rage and fear and that they would be determined to get me home as soon as possible so they could take care of me. All my life, through any small catastrophe, they had been there to pick me up and hold and love me. Yet when I told them what had happened I was met with silence. In disbelief I called my then-boyfriend and then my

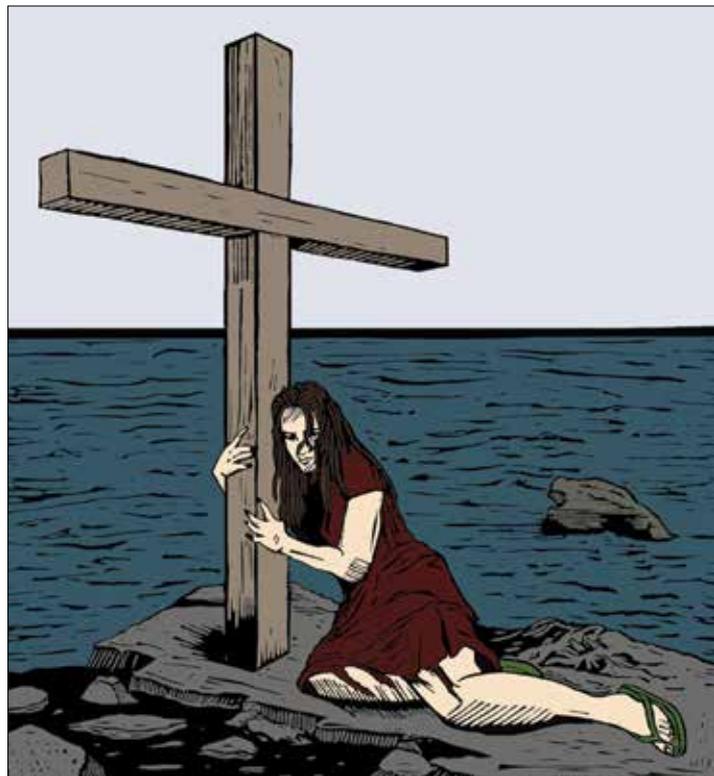
two best girlfriends. Each met my call with a similarly apathetic tone.

Once I returned to the United States, my boyfriend wanted nothing to do with me. My girlfriends pretended nothing had happened. I don't know whether or not their reactions were due to shock, fear or uncertainty about what to say. I have not asked. I just know that people who had loved me and who I expected to be there for me had left me to deal with this deep pain alone. I retreated inward into darkness.

When the rape first happened, I felt I was a victim of violence. Over time this morphed into something that I slowly and quietly came to believe I had somehow deserved. The rape, along with the lack of support from family and friends, made me feel indescribable shame. I became disconnected from the world—from my parents, my friends and from God. I went through my final year of college like an empty shell. I had no one who could meet me where I was. I felt I had no place where this new me would be accepted and loved. I was afraid to open up to others for fear of being judged. I tried praying and turning to God, but it seemed like a waste of time. I felt God had left me just like everyone else—that he had let

this happen to me.

My shame started to silently but effectively kill everything beautiful and bright in my world. I poured all my anger and loneliness into my schoolwork. I earned a 4.0 G.P.A. during my senior year, and I started a new job on Wall Street soon after. But even amid the excitement of New York City, I felt life-



less. I felt this way for two more years, and continued to long for joy and peace in my life.

Then a friend introduced me to the concept of spiritual direction. Something about this approach to my spirituality felt right, and fortunately I had the grace to seek out a woman

JOAN MILLER is a pseudonym. The author works in finance in New York City.

ART: SEAN QUIRK

who was able to meet with me. Prior to my first session, I felt very nervous and unsure of how I would be received. I would not have blamed anyone for not wanting to step inside my world. Instead, my spiritual director poured love and kindness into the darkness and my light started to shine. I felt safe sharing with her. Instead of apathy or disgust, I was met with love, compassion and care. I was finally able to cry over what had happened to me.

### **An Open Heart**

In those sessions, which were spread over several years, I realized I was deeply angry at God and felt abandoned by him—but even worse, I felt I somehow deserved his abandonment. My spiritual director invited me to share my pain with Jesus in prayer. In my prayer I was able to ask questions: *How could this have happened to me? God, do you really love me? Do I deserve your love? Am I good enough for you?* I wanted to hear God tell me: *I do love you. I made you in my image and you are beautiful just the way you are. I never left you. I was with you the night you were raped, the morning you called your parents. I held your hand on your long painful walks to the clinic to see if you had contracted H.I.V. I stroked your hair and whispered in your ear: I loved you when you felt misunderstood and abandoned. The courage to tell your spiritual director after years of silence came from me. I never wanted this to happen to you. I know and understand your pain and I only want you to be healed.*

During my time in spiritual direction and through prayer, the way I saw Jesus and my relationship with him started to change. He became more relatable. My feelings of shame, abandonment, betrayal and loneliness were feelings I knew Jesus had experienced as well. I prayed with Scripture from Holy Thursday and Good Friday. Scenes from the Garden of Gethsemane resonated in my heart. In the garden Jesus turns to his disciples and says, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.” We know that, instead of keeping awake, his friends fell asleep.

In my prayer, I imagined Jesus walking back from his prayer only to find his friends had fallen asleep. I imagined him feeling betrayed. These were men he loved and who loved him. Yet these friends—friends Jesus called upon in a time of true need—let him down. In my prayer, I felt compassion, love and understanding for Jesus and his suffering. At the same time, I was able to feel his compassion for me. I no longer felt alone. Jesus knew my suffering. Jesus had lived through it himself.

Despite the fact that I was starting to realize Jesus could understand my suffering, I was still unwilling to accept Jesus could love me for what had happened to me. Relationships, in general, were still difficult. I did not trust anyone other than my spiritual director with my story. I believed that others would look at me differently once I told them about my rape. I preferred to car-

ry my heavy and painful cross alone. It was exhausting.

This way of living changed about three years ago when I began dating a man who was compassionate and kind. After several months, I realized I was falling in love with him. Yet I still carried the weight of my story with me, and I feared he would leave me if he knew. Eventually, I decided it was better to tell him. If he did not accept me, I wanted to know as soon as possible, so that I could end the relationship before the pain of rejection was too much to bear. I braced myself for a reaction similar to those I had experienced before: silence or apathy. Instead, he wept.

He cried for me and for the pain I had been holding in my heart the last four years. He said he wished he could take away all my pain. His tears became all those tears that no one cried for me before; the tears I barely allowed myself to cry. The cross I had been carrying for so long was no longer being carried by me alone.

Like John, the beloved disciple who stays at the foot of Jesus’ cross, this man stayed by my side. Finally, I had another person to be with me in my pain. John loves Jesus to the end. John shows up. His love for Jesus is unconditional. This man was my John. I married him.

Only after I had the grace to receive my husband’s unconditional love for me did I realize what I had been missing, what I desired most: I wanted to come home to the love of Jesus. This desire has always lived inside me, but it was so hard for me to find it. I had always felt that my darkness was too much for God. I now know this is not true. With help I have found a place of surrender and trust. And yet my journey of healing is not over. I continue to pray and to share my story and to grow in my relationship with God. I have a new willingness to let God be God and heal, restore and renew me. I know that Jesus has always loved me. Even in my darkest moments, all I have ever desired or needed has been with me all along. **A**

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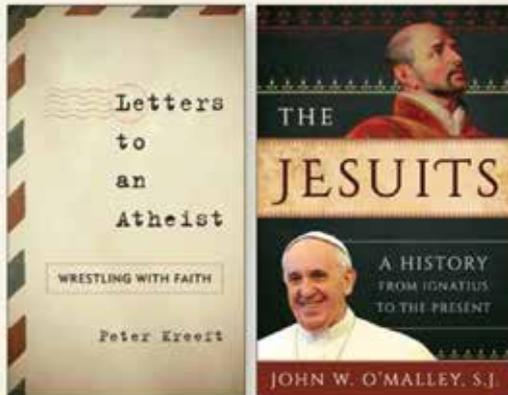
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The African novel has come of age in the early 21st century North American diaspora. Straddling homelands, histories, myths, looking for values and identity somewhere in between—those are the grand topics of the African novel.

“Novelists are sorted by the language they wrote in,” Steven Moore explains in the preface to his new, massive work, *The Novel: An Alternative History, 1600-1800* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013). Moore divides them into Spanish, German, French, Chinese, Persian, etc., even delineating English from American. But the scholar has no categories for Swahili, Yoruba or Oromo; his study does not include the 19th-21st centuries. The African novel is too recent.

What exactly makes a novel “African”? No one writes in an African language. The most famous of them all is surely Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958), but even the great Nigerian wrote in English as he exposed the exploits of British colonial-

ism and Christian missionaries.

Did Joseph Conrad write an African novel in *Heart of Darkness*? Did Graham Greene in his *A Burnt-Out Case*? Africa provides their settings—but the moods of the place, the emotions of the characters, the meaning all comes second or third hand. What can a Conrad or Greene really know of African milieus, myths and values? Other beautiful novels like *Someone Knows My Name*, by Lawrence Hill, and *Mating*, by Norman Rush, are also written by white proficients recreating something that they’ve only briefly experienced and understood.

Something else to consider: When talking about contemporary African novels, we don’t usually think of writers like the talented Ian Holding (*Unfeeling* and *Of Beasts and Beings*), a Zimbabwean. Holding is white. His second novel was even about white guilt. Nadine Gordimer, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, who died on July 13, champion of the novel in her native South Africa, is similarly missing from today’s conversation. The reason is simple: In the 21st century, we’re talking about blackness when we talk about African novels, writers from Africa who know what it means to be black in a white world.

Today’s master of the genre is the still only 37-year-old Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, winner of many awards, including a MacArthur Fellowship. Educated in the United States since she was 19, she has attended Johns Hopkins, Princeton, Yale and Harvard, but she grew up in West Africa. She is already one of the best (and best-selling) novelists of the 21st century, adored almost equally by critics and readers. In this respect she is in rare company, including Hilary Mantel and Cormac McCarthy. Adichie writes about race, blackness,

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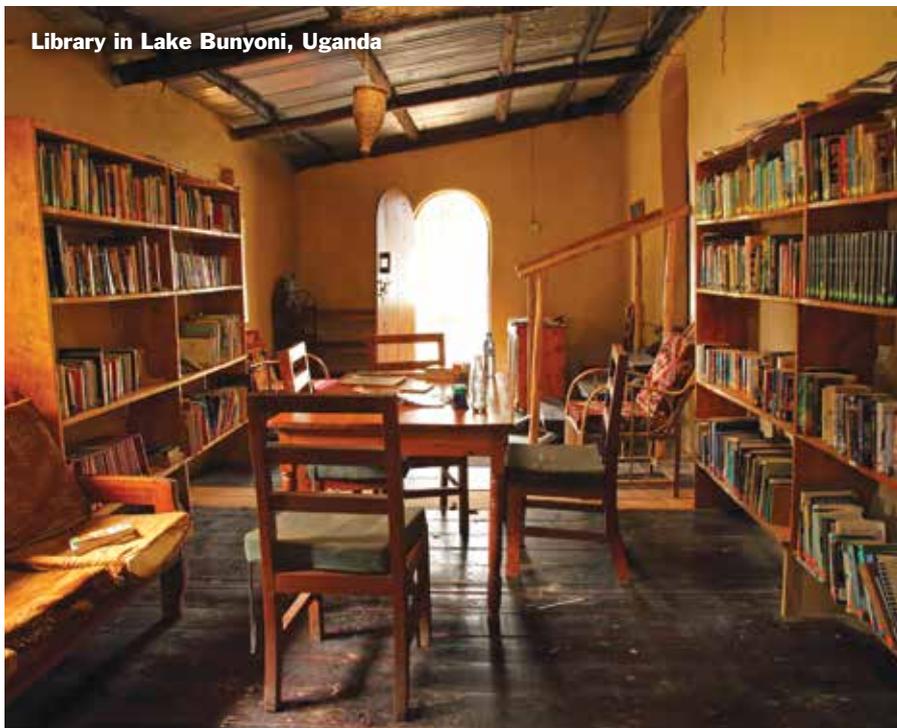


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homeland, Africa and America—what she knows.

In an interview in the Center for Religious Humanism's magazine *Image*, she explained her Catholic childhood in Nigeria: "We went to church every Sunday. I was drawn to religion, but I was the kid who just wouldn't shut up. I had questions. Everybody else went to church and came home. I wanted to go to the sacristy and talk to the priest about why he said that, I'm sure much to my father's irritation." In the same interview she continues: "I was drawn to the drama of the Catholic Church. I would cry at Paschal Mass when we raised the candles.... When it was time to renew your vows and they would light the candles, I would burst into tears because I was so moved. I loved the smell of incense and I loved the Latin. I keep meaning to write about it. I was a happily Catholic child." So yes, you guessed it, she also writes about being Catholic.

Central characters in an Adichie novel are not Peter and Julie, but Ugwu, Odenigbo and Kainene (*Half of a Yellow Sun*), or Ifemelu and Obinze in *Americanah*, the novel under review here. Whether Ugwu or Ifemelu, these characters are always trying to navigate how to belong and understand themselves in a world where their race, class and dreams tend to set them apart.

Another important African-American (the term doesn't seem quite right in this context) novelist today is Dinaw Mengestu, also a MacArthur Foundation grant recipient. Born in Addis Adaba, Ethiopia, in 1978, Dinaw's family fled during the years of communist revolution, when he was just 2; they raised him in suburban Chicago. The first sentence of his latest effort, *All Our Names*, sets the now-familiar scene: "When Isaac and I first met at the university, we both pretended that the campus and the streets of the capital were as familiar to us as the dirt paths of the rural villages we had grown up and lived in until only

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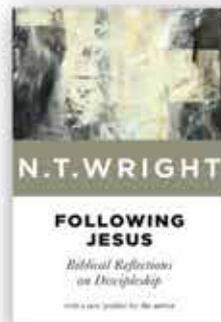
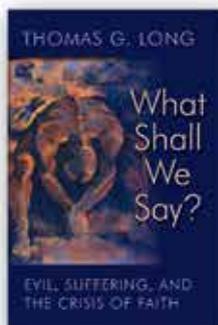
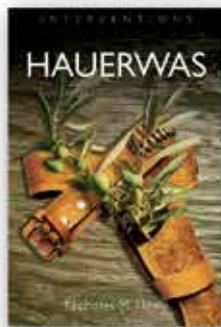
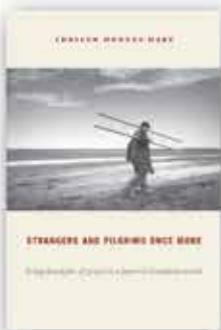
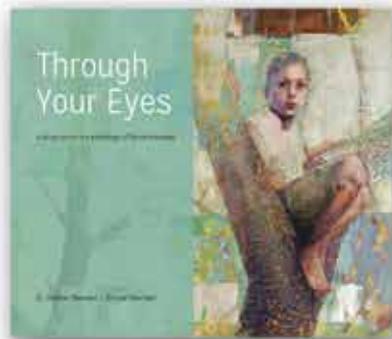
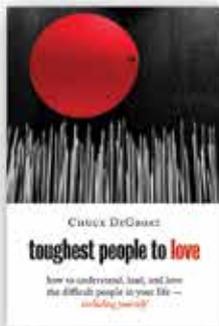
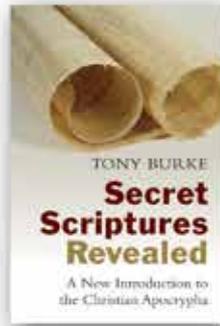
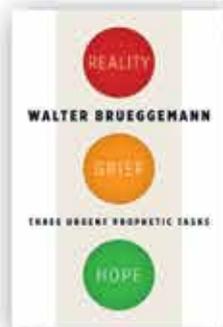
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a few months earlier..." This capital is Kampala, Uganda. Mengestu's debut, *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears*, which made his name, follows the story of a man in Washington, D.C., who fled the Dreg, or Ethiopian Revolution, more closely mirroring the experiences of his own family.

In *All Our Names*, as in *The Beautiful Things*, money swirls around the heads and in the imaginations of Mengestu's characters, and it confuses them. Week-old newspapers in the village are replaced by simultaneously happening events and real, dangerous opportunities. The second-hand Victorian-era novels they read back home did not begin to prepare them to speak English or understand the West in the 21st century. And the memories of violence, loss and pain from their pasts do not easily leave them. They look desperately for values that will pull them forward as they leave Africa behind.

Meanwhile, one more: Yvonne

Adhiambo Owuor's *Dust* actually does remind one of Joseph Conrad and Graham Greene. The novel depicts an Africa that we too often see in the news. Owuor is a Kenyan now living in Australia, and the opening page of his debut effort reveals a young soldier whose "fingers tremble on the trigger of an old, shiny AK-47" that was three weeks earlier in the hands "of a minor Somali warlord." Adichie's warm humanity, cultures intertwined, this is not.

But once again, in *Dust*, as in Adichie's *Americanah*, the African-born emigrate. A sister and brother escape their dusty homeland in northern Kenya, one to Canada, the other to the big city, Nairobi. When the brother dies a violent death, pursuing justice for others, the sister comes home. With the spiritual sensitivities of Marilynne Robinson, Owuor then traces the sister's path back to her childhood place, and parents, as she reflects on the meaning of place, identity, past and future. But, foreign to Robinson's

more bucolic settings, *Dust's* characters struggle with themes we find as essential backdrops to African novels: racism and the legacy of colonialism.

For good reasons the African novel has come of age. There are more African-born first, second and third generation men and women living in the United States, Canada and Britain than ever before. But I am not one of them, and still I find these novels moving, often unforgettable. This is probably because the displacement felt by characters in Adichie, Mengestu and Owuor is common in the lives of many of us, whether we've moved from one country to another or not, fled violence or not or are living settled in our chosen place. We are all seeking more meaningful ways to belong. We all feel fractured in some way.

---

**JON M. SWEENEY** is a critic who lives in Ann Arbor, Mich. His book, *When Saint Francis Saved the Church*, is available as physical book and ebook from Ave Maria Press, and in audio from Franciscan Media.



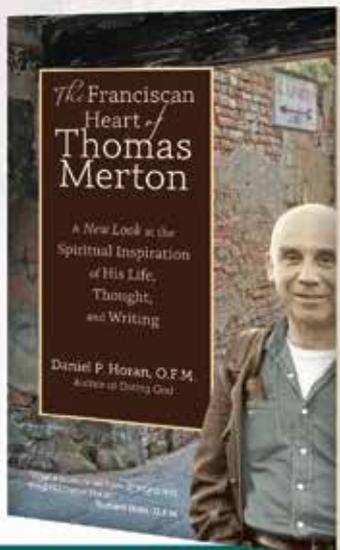
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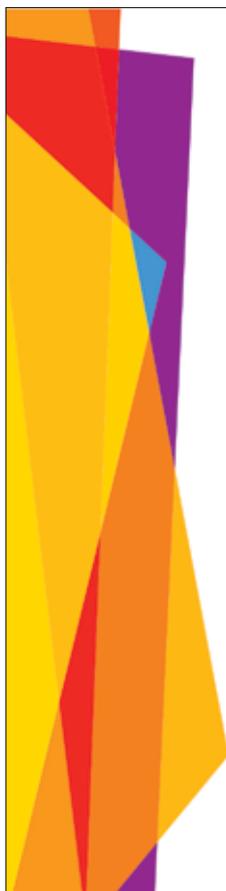
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## BACK-PEDALLING

### CYCLE OF LIES The Fall of Lance Armstrong

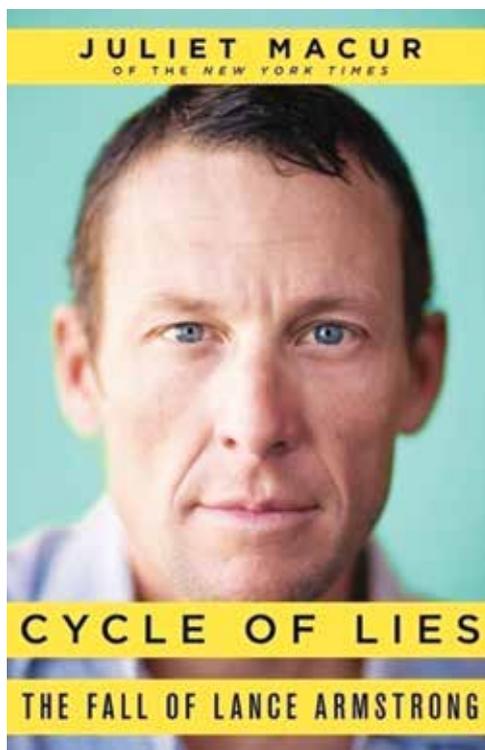
By Juliet Macur  
Harper. 480p \$27.99

“The ideal man,” Ayn Rand wrote, commenting on Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*, “is predestined by birth to rule others and sacrifice them to himself, [he believes] that reason, logic, principles are futile and debilitating, that morality is useless, that the ‘superman’ is ‘beyond good and evil,’ that he is a ‘beast of prey’ whose ultimate standard is nothing but his own will.” If that’s the case, no one is more ideal than Lance Armstrong, at least as he’s found in Juliet Macur’s fine new chronicle, *Cycle of Lies: The Fall of Lance Armstrong*. She tells his story as if it were a morality play—Armstrong, the amoral superman, does whatever it takes to win, while his virtuous foes, bound as they are to act on their immovable moral principles, try to stop him.

There’s no place better suited for supermen than long distance cycling. Take the Tour de France, the sport’s greatest race. This year’s event covers 3,656 km over 21 days (think Detroit to Los Angeles with the Alps standing in for the Rockies and the Pyrenees for the Sierras). As one 1924 rider put it, the (then shorter) tour “is like martyrdom. And even the Stations of the Cross had only fourteen stations, while we have fifteen stages.” Condemned to pedal these two-wheeled crosses, competitors have always sought a chemical Simon of Cyrene to help them along this *Chemin de Croix*. Macur’s historical inventory of performance-enhancing drugs would make Charlie Sheen blush: amphetamines, cocaine, strychnine, wine (we are in France, after all), human growth hormone, nitroglycerin, folic acid, aspi-

rin, cortisone, testosterone, ephedrine, nicotine, horse ointment (whatever that is), whiskey, caffeine, chloroform, morphine, anabolic steroids and the Armstrong-favorite, eruthropoietin.

This last drug, developed for patients with severe anemia and AIDS, thickens the blood and increases its oxygen-bearing capacity. Take too much and that blood congeals, growing too thick for the



heart to pump. In the worst cases, the blood becomes so hard to move that the heart stops beating. From 1987 to 1993, performance enhancing drugs, including eruthropoietin, played a role in the deaths of at least 23 cyclists. From 1996 to 2010, only one Tour de France winner—2008’s Carlos Sastre—has never tested positive for PEDs. Playing it safe and following the rules is not an option for tour competitors. And so Macur shows us that what enables Armstrong to win seven tours in a row is less his

athletic ability (he’s world class, but, according to one teammate, there were a half-dozen other cyclists with more talent) than his spectacular gift at doping and not getting caught. On the Tour de France, morality is for losers.

So, what better setting could there be for a morality play? Macur writes one that reads like a can’t-put-it-down thriller. As Armstrong wins each successive tour and more and more people are drawn into his doping and its coverup, Lance starts to look like a Texan Michael Corleone—watching him, your faith in humanity’s goodness fades and you wonder to yourself, “just how much is he going to get away with?” Everything and everyone around Armstrong contrived to keep him winning “clean.” Remember those ubiquitous yellow Livestrong bracelets? Turns out their creation was timed to steal the news cycle from a first set of doping accusations aimed at tour riders. Armstrong’s drug dealers laundered their money through his team’s spare bikes, provided—with a wink and a nod—by Trek. Even Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner, Republican of Wisconsin, is implicated—lobbing threats at the government organization investigating Armstrong. The book is worth reading for those details alone.

It is also worth reading for Macur’s delightful characterizations. Most impressive is her portrait of Betsy Andreus, the wife of an early Armstrong teammate, Frankie Andreus. Fortright and fearless, Betsy, the “fresh-faced brunette,” demands to know if her future husband is Catholic and pro-life before she’ll date him. Her world is black and white, good versus evil, and she plays the perfect foil to Armstrong’s guiltless lying.

Considering the depth of her portrayal, it’s all the more odd that Macur’s portrait of Armstrong himself comes off as one-dimensional. To Macur, Armstrong is nothing more than a bully

How are you being called to serve?

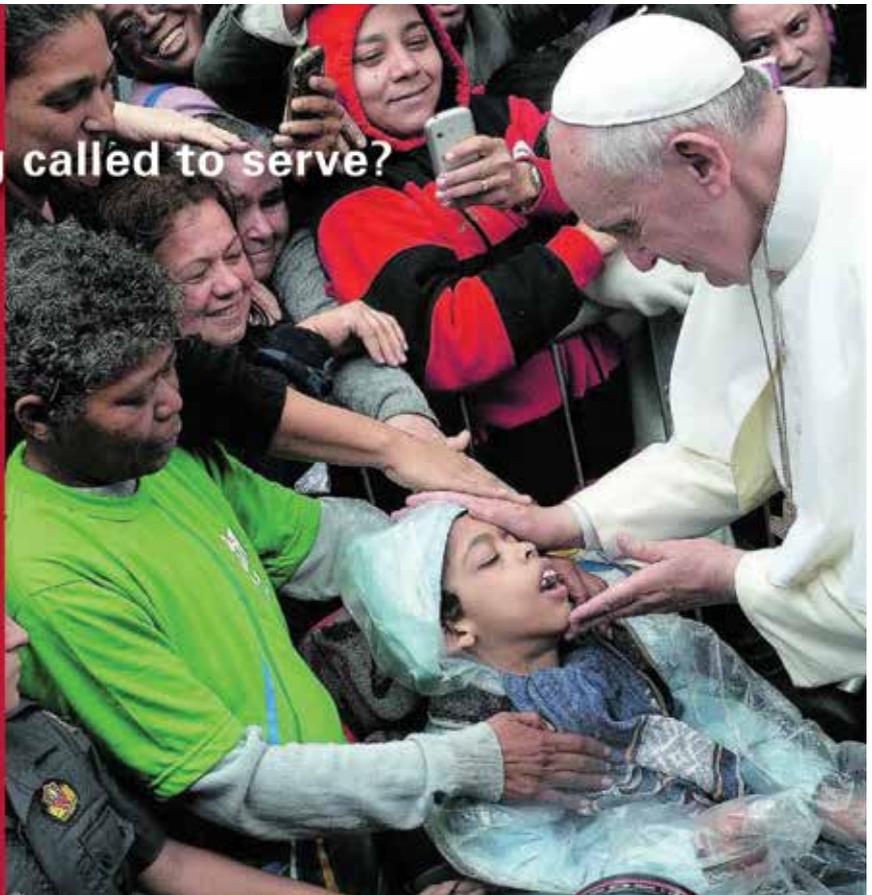


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**Molly Worthen**, Department of History, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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willing to do whatever it takes to win. It is difficult to believe Lance could be so simple. One wonders if Macur is not so offended by Armstrong—he has the regrettable habit of comparing those investigating him to Osama bin Laden and Adolf Hitler—that she cannot see straight.

Which is O.K., really, because the book is not about Lance. This is a tale of good and evil. Macur has transposed a medieval morality play into contemporary cycling. Performance-enhanced, win-at-all-costs, Armstrong plays Vice, casting off futile and debilitating morality so that his will might triumph. Virtue is Betsy Andreus, whose single-minded commitment to fidelity, fairness and the truth lead her to place her family's livelihood at the feet of Armstrong's lawyers in a never-ending crusade to reveal the truth about Lance's ill-gotten success. Betsy recalls the first encounter between good and evil: "You can't control everything in your life, you know," Virtue warned Vice, "because that's what God's for." Vice's reply? "Betsy, that's bullshit, I control my own fate."

Macur's parable shows how ugly and foolhardy that Randian hero can be. For all the *Atlas Shrugged* talk on the Christian right—think Rand Paul and Paul Ryan—living out Ayn Rand's philosophy, as Armstrong did so well, seems less than Christ-like. "He treats people like bananas," one *friend* described our former champion. "He takes what he needs, then just tosses the peel on the side of the road."

Rare is the book today where the good guys win. And rarer still is the book where this triumph is free from sentimentality, and—at the same time—unabashedly moral. But Macur does it—harnessing our disgust at Armstrong's amorality to remind us that good and evil do still exist and sometimes good wins. Armstrong's fall is our hope.

---

PERRY PETRICH, S.J., teaches English at Brophy College Preparatory in Phoenix.

SIDNEY CALLAHAN

# WOMAN OF ALL SEASONS

## IN QUEST

### OF THE JEWISH MARY

#### The Mother of Jesus in History, Theology, and Spirituality

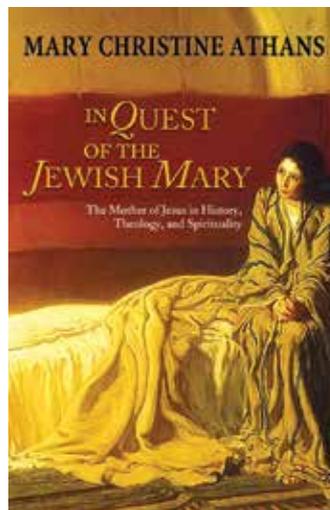
By Mary Christine Athans  
Orbis. 240p \$19

Few works deliver on the promise of their title with such success as Mary Christine Athans's book on Mary. The scholarship is solid, the prose accessible and her personal reflections engaging. The book can also be provocative, since discussions of Mary lead to questions about the contested role of women in the church.

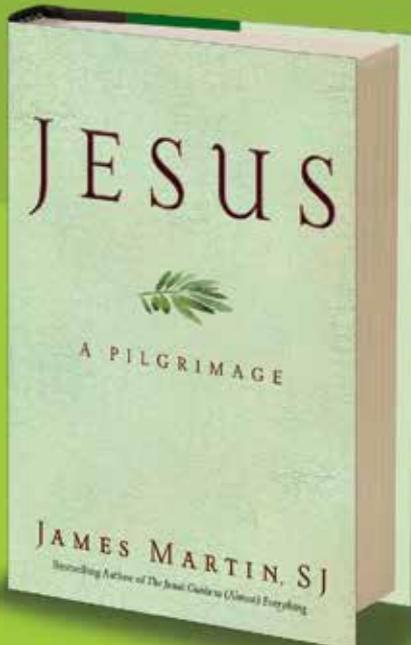
Mary Christine Athans, B.V.M., is a religious sister who has dedicated her life's work to understanding past and

present day Judaism and its relationship to Christianity. As a scholarly woman of faith she has combined devotion to Mary with research in feminist thought and theology. Her intellectual insights into the continuity of Christianity with its Jewish roots have been deepened by participating in Hebrew prayer services with Jewish congregations, Jewish scholars and ecumenical groups of women. Athans demonstrates loving understanding of Judaism and

feminism from the inside. Jesus now lives for her as an observant Jewish rabbi with female disciples. Being able to find the Jewish Jesus in historical context gives wings to her quest for the Jewish Mary.



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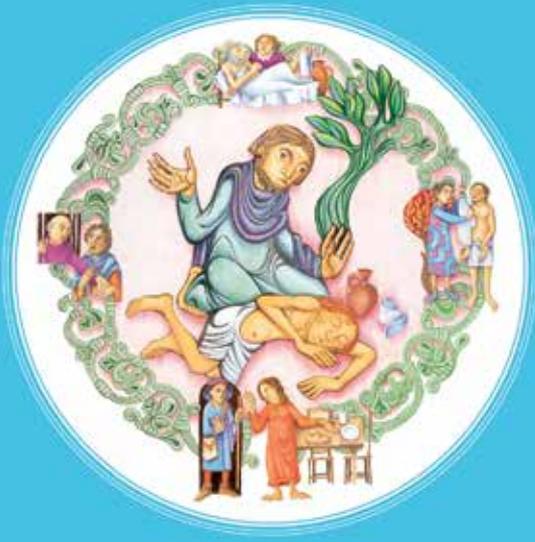
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— 2014–2015 —

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Mark 1:40–45  
*Cure of the Leper*



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queror. Misery and unrest prevailed. Pluralism within Jewish groups produced internal conflicts and bitter controversies in the struggle for religious control.

Athans describes the diverse scene and delivers some surprising facts. Who knew that the Pharisees were divided into more rigid and more liberal factions? Or that Jesus' teachings overlap with that of those Pharisee groups who followed the great sage Hillel? He famously taught that love of God and neighbor were the core of the law. His group of Pharisees stressed "the interiority of the Covenant" and the "oral Torah," and asserted that the conversion of hearts and minds produces the merciful deeds that please God.

Even more significant for modern women is the accrual of evidence that some Pharisee groups may have had independent female members participating in the study and discussions. In fact, wealthy women played leading roles in the synagogues, and poorer women members participated in the reading and study of Torah. Mary would have known of the example of strong Jewish women in the tradition, like Miriam, Judith, Ruth, Esther and the mother of the Maccabees. Observant Jewish women would have known of these heroines, prayed their prayers, recited the psalms and celebrated the liturgical rituals of the season. While the material culture of poor Jews struggling to support their families could be minimal, knowledge of the Torah, the psalms, the prophets and ritual celebrations in home and temple generated a rich religious heritage for men and women. Women could also be supportive members of a teacher's disciples, as in the case of Jesus himself.

Athans asserts that Mary not only would have prayed, read and studied Torah with Jesus in the local gathering or synagogue, but in all likelihood would have been friends and co-workers with his female disciples. After

the resurrection, Mary was present with the disciples at Pentecost and the birth of the church. Athans envisions the actual Mary as a strong woman of heroic faith working in the early church's "disciples of equal." In naming Mary "prophet," "friend of God" and "truly our sister," who takes a leading role in church ministry, a Christian feminist message is delivered. A new understanding of Mary gives new impetus to bring about the full and final equality of women in the church.

Understanding the 2,000-year-long story of Mary's role in the Western church is also essential in order to move forward in the present. In the first part of her book, Athans gives a succinct and fascinating account of Mary, "the woman of a thousand faces"—and of manifold titles and images. In theological struggles to understand the Incarnation, Mary's role becomes debated and contested. In contact with pervasive pagan worship of feminine goddesses, Marian devotion is influenced and exaggerated. It also seems true that Mary's tender maternal mercy was an important counter to distorted Christian images of a wrathful father-God and judging Son. Similarly, when the Holy Spirit was all but forgotten, Mary subsumed its creative role as bringer of beauty and wisdom.

When royalty and empire are glorified, images of Mary as queen or empress are adopted with appropriate cultural forms. As Christians finally separated from their Jewish roots, amnesia for the Jewishness of Jesus and Mary grew along with anti-Semitism. Mary as the blonde, blue-eyed Nordic princess was born. In eras of sentimental romantic mores, Marian images and ideals of pure behavior were constructed that constrained women's intellectual and social development. Essential feminine gender identities as passive, receptive brides were prescribed and justified as Marian characteristics that complemented the es-

entially opposite male. And so on.

Today the scripturally based church reforms of the Second Vatican Council have blessedly allowed past distortions in Marian devotion to fade away. Mary Athans's message is more than correct. Assimilating the Jewish Mary

into our future church life is going to bear much fruit. It may even make us, through history and meeting, worthy of the promises of Christ.

---

**SIDNEY CALLAHAN** is a psychologist and distinguished scholar at the Hastings Center.

FRANKLIN FREEMAN

## THE HURT LIFE

### TENNESSEE WILLIAMS Mad Pilgrimage of the Flesh

By John Lahr  
W. W. Norton & Company. 784p \$39.95

I've heard it said: hurt people hurt. If anyone was ever hurt as a child, not physically but emotionally, it was Tennessee Williams. His mother Edwina's denial did the hurting, denial she turned into an art form, which her son turned into art. And John Lahr, senior drama critic of *The New Yorker* for over 20 years, has written a beautiful biography of the artist.

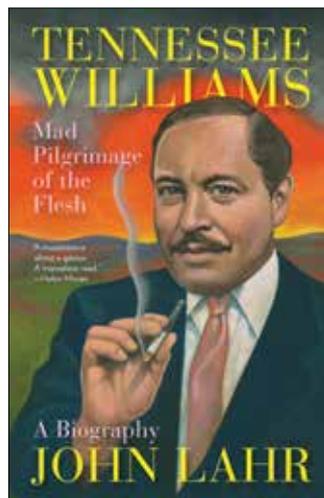
What Edwina denied, probably because her father, an Episcopalian clergyman, denied it in himself, was the flesh. Williams believed that his maternal grandfather, the Reverend Dakin, had been blackmailed because of a homosexual encounter in Key West, Fla. Williams lived for much of his childhood with both his parents and the Reverend Dakin and his wife. As Lahr writes, "Williams, who often complained of feeling 'like a ghost,' grew up in not one but two haunted households where secrets and the unsayable suffused daily life with a sense of masquerade..."

He grew up, then, in a theater of

sorts, each member of the family a player—except perhaps his father, Cornelius, also known as C.C., who believed only in making money. In this toxic environment, Williams turned to writing, something Edwina encouraged to drive C.C., who considered all writers loafers, up the wall. But Williams succeeded better than she probably wanted him to and escaped C.C.'s philistinism and what Williams called his mother's "monolithic Puritanism." His play "The Glass Menagerie," based upon his family drama, was a huge hit on Broadway from its opening night, March 31, 1945.

From then on Williams hurled himself into his writing and into what he called a "mad pilgrimage of the flesh," which, aside from the writing, meant for Williams a promiscuous homosexual "cruising" lifestyle relieved by the occasional stable relationship with a man he loved. His longest relationship was with Frank Merlo, with whom Williams shared a house in Key West, a place Williams loved for "the water, the eternal turquoise and foam of the sea and the sky."

But no matter how stable life was in Key West, Williams hurt the people in his relationships, both professional



and personal. His erratic and sometimes perfidious behavior ultimately ruptured his collaborations with Elia Kazan, the famous director, who demanded Williams revise his plays into better shape, and his long-suffering agent Audrey Wood.

The fall of the playwright came from a combination of changing times—the romantic freedom of the flesh he had dramatized boomeranged to say he was out of date, the struggle was over—and his abuse of himself through pills and alcohol. Empty, he tried to fill himself. He tried psychoanalysis, which helped a little but which he stopped too soon; he even tried God when his brother Dakin prodded him to convert to Catholicism. He had a deep devotion to Our Lady, and, when he was receiving an honorary doctorate at Harvard, knelt before Mother Teresa, put his head in her lap and was blessed. But the pilgrimage ended with him holed up in a hotel room with booze and Seconal and an overdose, no one knows whether intentional or not.

Lahr has written a masterful portrait. How he apparently hops around chronologically while still telling the story in a progressive way, all the while supplying interpretations of the plays, something he says has been lacking in all previous biographies, defies analysis. It probably has something to do with the 12 years it took him to write it. There were only a few times when I felt a touch of vertigo and wondered where I was in the playwright's life. And the book is gloriously free of the grinding of any personal, political or religious axes.

I can do no better than to quote Lahr's last paragraph, which points to the heroism of Williams's life:

In his single-minded pursuit of greatness, Williams exhausted himself and lost his way. "I want to get my goodness back," he frequently said. If he didn't find the light, his outcrying heart cer-

tainly cast it. "What implements have we but words, images, colors, scratches upon the caves of our solitude?" he said. In the game of hide-and-seek that he and his theater played with the

world, Williams left a trail of beauty so that we could try to find him.

---

FRANKLIN FREEMAN writes from Saco, Me., where he lives with his wife and four children.

M. ROSS ROMERO

## MODERN 'REPUBLIC'

### PLATO AT THE GOOGLEPLEX Why Philosophy Won't Go Away

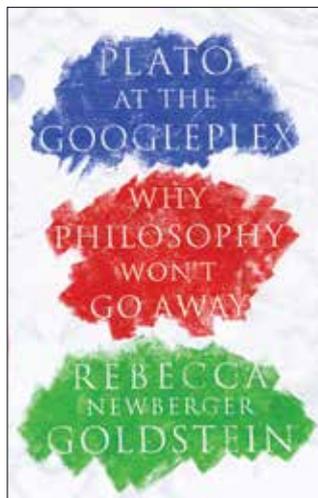
By Rebecca Newberger Goldstein  
Pantheon 480p \$29.95

When I was in doctoral studies in philosophy, a Jesuit professor in another discipline asked me what my dissertation topic was. "Plato!" he chafed, "What could you possibly have to say about Plato that hasn't already been said?" His remark provided me with ample motivation to finish my dissertation. From the standpoint of academic scholarship, Rebecca Goldstein doesn't offer much that is new about Plato. Instead, in *Plato at the Googleplex*, she does something better: Goldstein brings Plato back to life.

By casting Plato as the main character in what she calls "dialogues out of time," four conversations in settings familiar to us, she shows the enduring value of philosophical questioning. First, Plato goes to Google headquarters in Santa Clara, Calif., (the Googleplex) where he learns about the Google algorithm and its technique of crowd sourcing from a software engineer. Plato concludes "Google is gathering information.... It's not clear it's gathering knowledge." Next, Plato

shares the stage with a famous psychotherapist and a tiger-mom celebrity author who debate the best way to raise children. Both invoke Plato's *Republic* as support for their respective position. Then Plato appears on a cable news show called "The Real McCoy," where a Jesuit-educated, "straight-talking" host bombastically declares his view of philosophy. It's one of those we-don't-have-anything-to-teach-so-we'll-just-lecture-you-on-and-on-about-your-own-moral-superiority subjects. Finally, Plato visits a neuroscience lab on a university campus, where he and a philosophically trained lab assistant debate a famous neuroscientist whose findings about the brain take aim at free will. In a nice closing touch, the book ends as Plato is slid inside of the magnet in order to get a picture of his own brain (much as Socrates' own life ended when he drank the cup of hemlock).

Along the way, *Plato at the Googleplex* offers many compelling insights about the field of philosophy. Progress in philosophy, for example, is not as apparent as it is in the sciences because philosophical progress is invisible: "... it is incorporated into our points of view.... We don't see it, because we see with it." Moreover, philosophy is a field

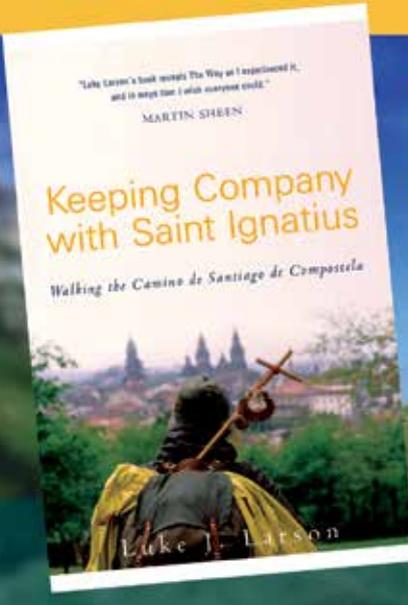


that is assumed by everyone whether they admit it or not: "...all people have a stake in believing themselves masters of much of the domain of philosophy, most especially the questions of how life should be lived. To think oneself to be anything less than a master seems to diminish one's very humanity." The facile dichotomy between sciences and humanities must be challenged—without either of them you don't have knowledge.

We also observe as Goldstein's Plato displays his familiarity with massive open online courses, or MOOCs (this is how he learned neuroscience), but also critiques them since they do not honor the pedagogical paradox of the field of philosophy. Although it is the student (the putative receiver) who is transformed, the physical presence of the teacher is still essential precisely because "knowledge itself is non-transferable from teacher to student." Plato also examines his own assumptions and willingly corrects his biases. In one dialogue a quick-witted book publicist named Cheryl teaches him to auto-correct his own sexist language. We see him serve as a guest columnist for a romantic advice column, discover his "type" on the Myers Briggs Personality Test (he's an INTJ, the mastermind) and make his first Google query. In a very poignant scene, Plato's search for "Socrates," his friend and teacher whose death he still mourns, yields over 4,700,000 hits.

While *Plato at the Googleplex* offers four lively dialogues that engage contemporary debates and vividly illustrate the enduring relevance of philosophy, its shortcomings parallel those of academic philosophy in the undergraduate classroom. The four chapters of dialogues are interspersed with four additional lengthy chapters that are much too academic in tone.

Do you remember those moments in philosophy class when the discussion was just heating up and becoming relevant to your life and inexplicably



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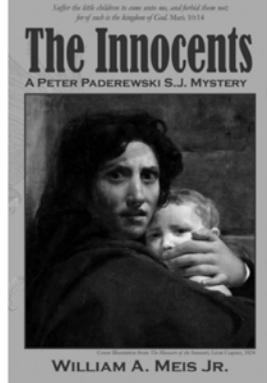


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the professor retreated behind the podium, picked up his yellowed lecture notes and droned on about arcane concepts and figures for the rest of the period? If you do, then this is how those four chapters may feel to you. The not-so-subtle message is this: philosophy can be fun; now eat your vegetables.

Second, Goldstein sometimes unnecessarily resorts to 50-cent words. She writes, for example, that Plato, as compared to Socrates, “was anything but epistemologically insouciant.” Finally, the interspersed chapters contain lengthy tangents that make them a tough grind. Here she draws on figures from the history of philosophy like Spinoza, Pascal, Nietzsche, Russell, Ryle and Harry Frankfurt. These sections contain Goldstein’s intellectual autobiography, and while these will be engaging to some readers (not least of all because she once won a MacArthur “genius” award), others will find them dull.

This reveals another problem that *Plato at the Googleplex* shares with some philosophical classrooms—professors who are genuises (and many who are not), sometimes teach as if this were all that mattered. Showy lectures allow them to avoid the nitty-gritty and vulnerability of actual philosophical dialogue.

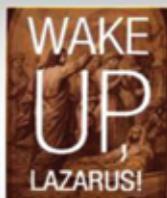
In undergraduate Jesuit higher-education these days, we are watching as the prominence of philosophical classics and concepts gives way to more popular and user-friendly fields. At our universities, undergraduates, who used to take better than 15 hours of philosophy, now get by with a course or two. Goldstein’s book, then, is a welcome and refreshing reminder of the enduring importance of the art of philosophical questioning and of the discipline that practices it.

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**M. ROSS ROMERO, S.J.,** is assistant professor of philosophy at Creighton University and author of *Without the Least Tremor: The Significance of the Sacrifice of Socrates, forthcoming from SUNY Press.*

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## BODY-BUILDING

Last month, after a long and meticulously planned journey from a shrine in Padua, Italy, to Springfield, Mass., a relic of St. Anthony arrived at the aptly named St. Anthony Maronite Catholic Church there. My mother proclaimed this news to me with excitement, knowing that Anthony is my favorite saint and the inspiration for my confirmation name. I shared her excitement, but a part of me also was skeptical. How many others felt the same? Would people really come from all over to view a wrinkled piece of a holy man? Was the entire thing just a bit too odd or outdated for Catholics in the 21st century?

Relics are, admittedly, one of the more difficult elements of Catholicism to explain to those unfamiliar with the concept. And yet, the desire to be close to people we admire is universal. We hardly blink when fans reach out to grasp the leg or arm of a rock musician playing to the crowd; we laughingly suggest that we'll never wash our hand again after shaking hands with a favorite actor.

We even vie for the celebrity equivalent of second-class relics. Once, after seeing Hugh Jackman perform on Broadway, I watched a theatergoer bid (and pay) \$10,000 for one of the actor's sweaty tank tops, worn during the show. (The money was donated to a good cause, but the aggressive bidding indicated that owning the shirt was a major incentive.) On another occasion, my sister saw a teenage girl pick up a chewed piece of gum that had been discarded by Johnny Damon, then the Red Sox centerfielder. The girl lifted the gum, wrapped in a tissue, and gazed upon

it with wonder, saying, "This has been in his mouth."

Both saints and celebrities are often reduced to mere ideas or idols, avatars of their flesh and blood bodies. It is all too easy to forget our shared humanity. Often, we reach out to them because we want to be closer to the qualities they embody. But while our efforts to follow today's celebrities tend to be motivated by a desire to be closer to their fame, the corporeal reality of the saints who came before us ideally reminds us of the very real challenges they faced in living lives of faith.

Virtual connections proliferate in our everyday lives, so an in-person encounter holds even more weight. Yet an encounter with St. Anthony's relic isn't exactly the same as meeting him face to face, and many may find it strange. Alessandro Ratti, the Conventual Franciscan priest who brought the relic from Padua to Springfield, admitted as much in a talk he gave to young Catholics. "For some a relic might seem weird or scary, but we are people of the body," he told [iobserve.org](http://iobserve.org), the diocesan news website (full disclosure: my mother works for the diocese). "We have always thought the human body is a powerful link between those in heaven and those on earth."

A powerful link was formed among the community, as well. The opportunity to be close to a piece of a saint brought many people closer to each other. Lucy Ramos, the executive secretary for the Catholic Latino

Ministry Office in Springfield, told [iobserve.org](http://iobserve.org) that among those visiting the relic there was a true sense of community. It was "as if we knew each other for many years," she said, "as if we were related."

And it turns out my skepticism was misplaced. The organizers of the event estimate that between 15,000 and 20,000 people came to venerate the

relic during its nine-day stay in Western Massachusetts. Special Masses were celebrated for Catholics of Italian, Portuguese, Polish, Latino and Vietnamese heritage, including Masses in both the Latin and Maronite rite and one dedicated to the Christians in Syria and Iraq. After an evening Mass of healing, the church stayed open until 1 a.m. to allow all who attended to venerate the relic.

The inspiration and passion surrounding the relic of St. Anthony allowed many to return to their families and communities feeling renewed. Standing in line between an elderly woman who asked for help to lift up her granddaughter to touch the relic glass and a young man wearing gold chains and designer sneakers solemnly bowing his head in prayer, I couldn't help but feel connected to those around me and grateful for this strange little piece of a saint that had united us. Together we were striving to lead holy lives in the real world. Inspired by the bodily presence of a saint, we set out to work toward becoming more fully the body of Christ.

Relics are difficult to explain to those unfamiliar with the concept.



# Payment Due

TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), OCT. 19, 2014

Readings: Is 45:1-6; Ps 96:1-10; 1 Thess 1:1-5; Mt 22:15-21

*“Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor?” (Mt 22:17)*

One of Jesus’ most famous sayings challenges us to consider a simple question: what do I owe to whom? The saying is mellifluous in the King James translation, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.” It is teasingly straightforward, so straightforward that the saying cannot be made simpler, and yet its meaning is not obvious. What are the things due Caesar and what does not belong to God?

Some interesting context is offered by Isaiah 45, in which God establishes the Persian king Cyrus and calls him, a Gentile ruler just like Caesar, “his anointed” (*mashiach*). In Isaiah God employs Cyrus “to subdue nations before him and strip kings of their robes,” even “though you do not know me, so that they may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is no one besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other.” Cyrus is the instrument by which God’s divine majesty is demonstrated. Whatever power Cyrus has is on loan from the Lord. This belief in God’s sovereign rule over all humanity would have been shared by all Jews.

So when some Pharisees and Herodians ask Jesus, “Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?” The question is meant to be the coup de grace in an attack by flattery, in which the set-up—“Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of

God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality”—is intended to lower the guard for a trap. What is the trap? Would Jesus align himself with the foreign occupiers by accepting payment of taxes to Rome, and so offend Jewish religious sensibilities, or would he reject payment of taxes to Rome, a popular stance among the people, but potentially treasonous to the Roman oppressors.

Jesus was comfortable on other occasions avoiding questions designed as traps, like the demand to reveal the source of his authority (Mt 21:23-27), but Jesus seems to have felt compelled to answer this question, even if the questioners intended malice, the flattery was insincere and the answer offered puzzling. The matter of the relation between God and emperor, or church and state, required a response.

Jesus asked his questioners, therefore, to “show me the coin used for the tax,” and they showed him a denarius. The image on the denarius was most likely that of Tiberius, who was styled on coins as “Tiberius Caesar son of the divine Augustus,” thereby attributing divinity to Augustus and Tiberius. When the Pharisees and Herodians identify the coin as Caesar’s, Jesus says, “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

So, who is owed what? Some scholars suggest that it is as simple as it

seems: the coins that bear the emperor’s likeness are owed to the emperor. The government, even that of the pagan Roman state, exists only through the true sovereignty of God, and taxes are a part of the obedience due to it. Another proposal points to the enigmatic nature of the saying, whose meaning depends upon whether one believes that all things belong to God, in which case Caesar is owed nothing, or whether one believes the emperor is entitled to taxes, in which case payment is owed to Rome. Whatever the case, Jesus places the onus on his interlocutors to answer their own question and avoids the trap that direct support of either Jewish religious zealots or the Roman state would have caught him. But the question,



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Imagine yourself in the midst of this encounter: how do you understand Jesus’ answer?

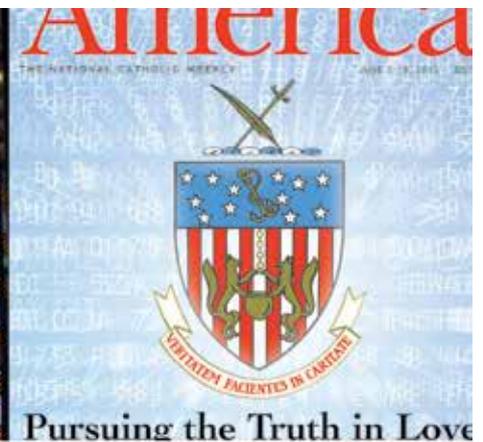
which now belongs to us, often is seen to be answered when we decide who is owed the denarius. In fact, as an ongoing process of assessment and decision, the deeper question is: What do I owe God?

The coin itself, minted by the Roman state, belongs to Rome, but the denarius portrayed Tiberius as divine, a status reserved for God alone. Perhaps Jesus is saying that in the divine economy, money is not the currency that counts, so give it to those who minted it, which includes deluded earthly rulers. The payment due to the sovereign God alone is worship, and it is owed to no other. And if the things of Caesar and the things of God collide? God is Lord of all.

**JOHN W. MARTENS**

**JOHN W. MARTENS** is an associate professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn. Twitter: @BibleJunkies.

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